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CALDERON'S PRISONER



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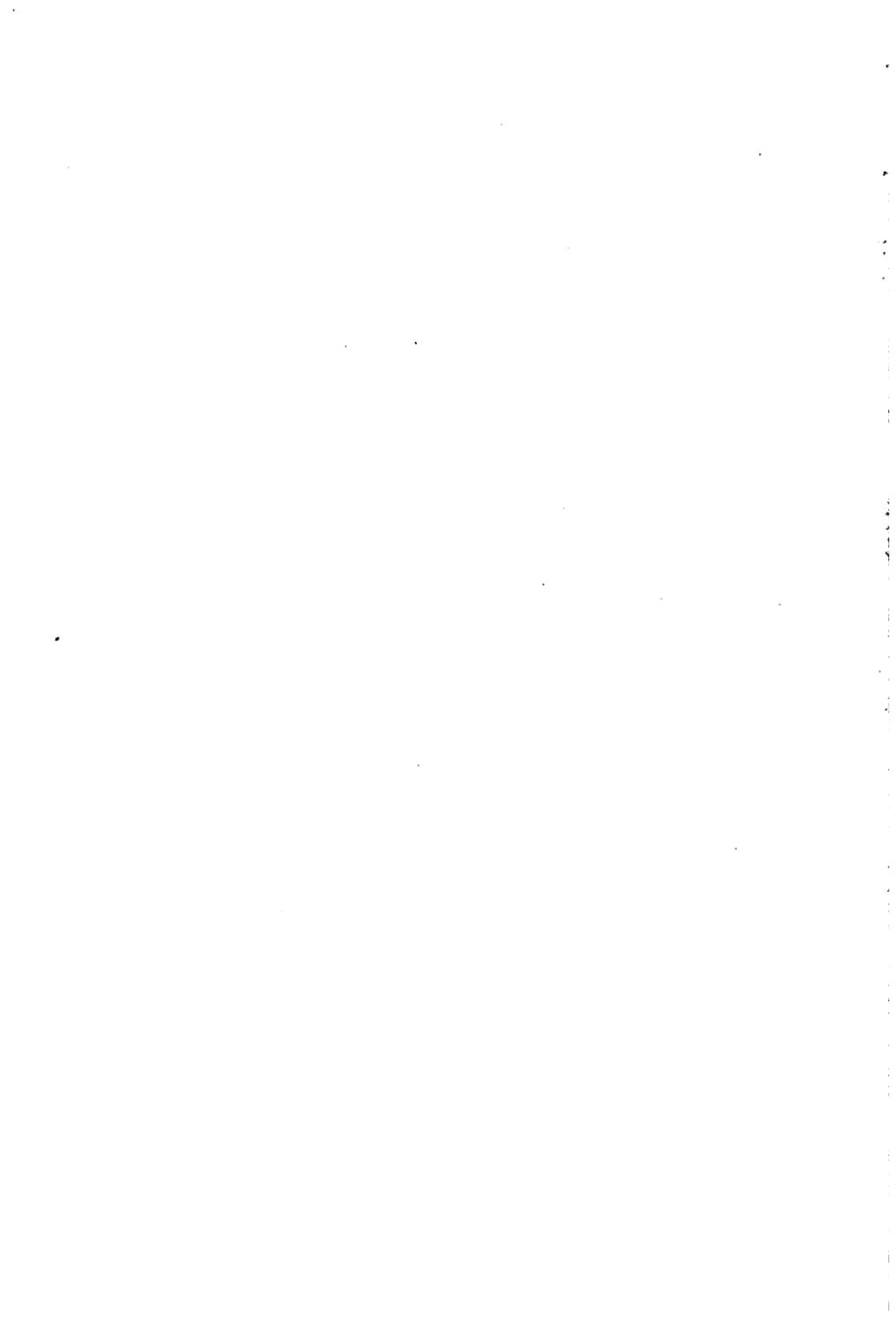
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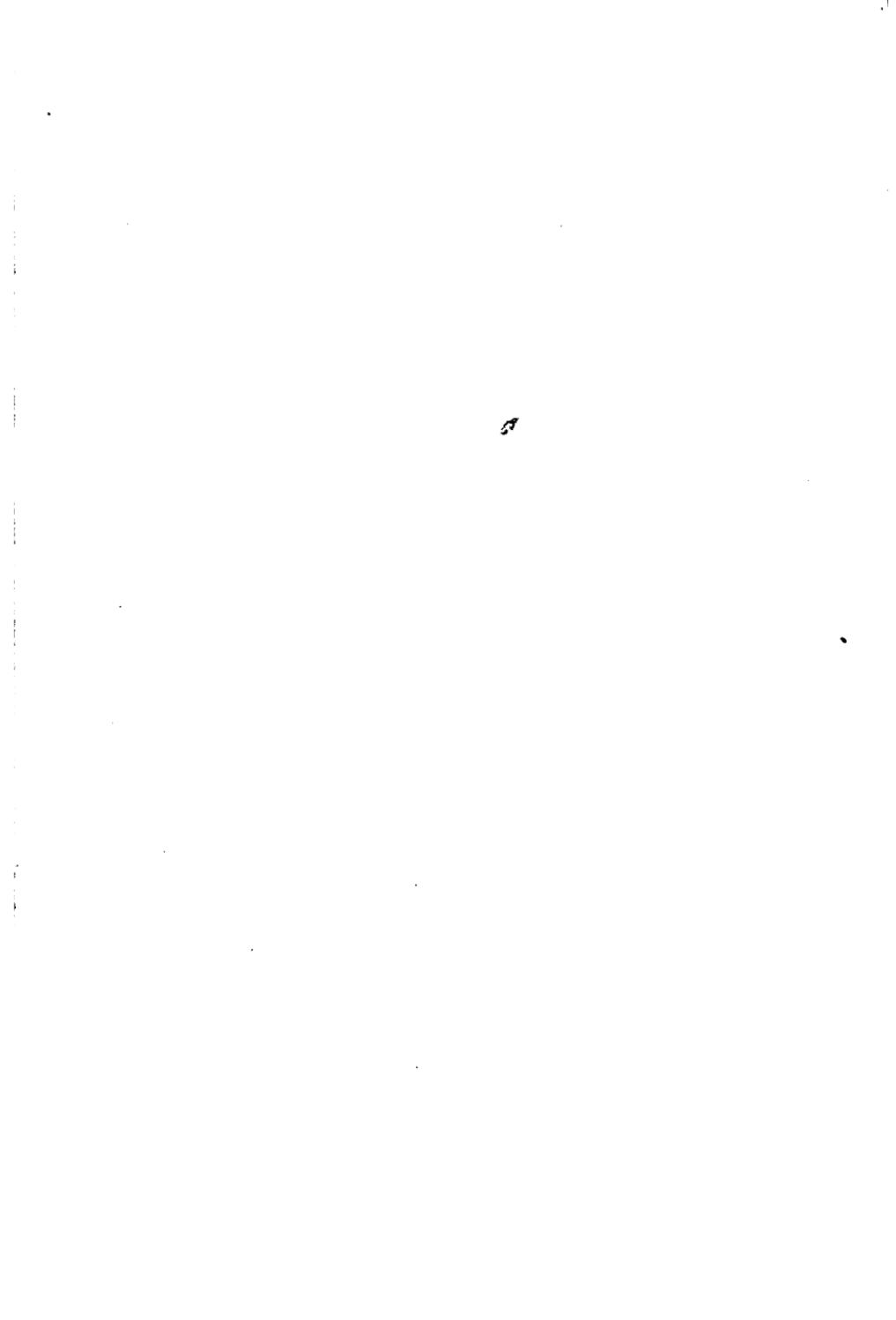
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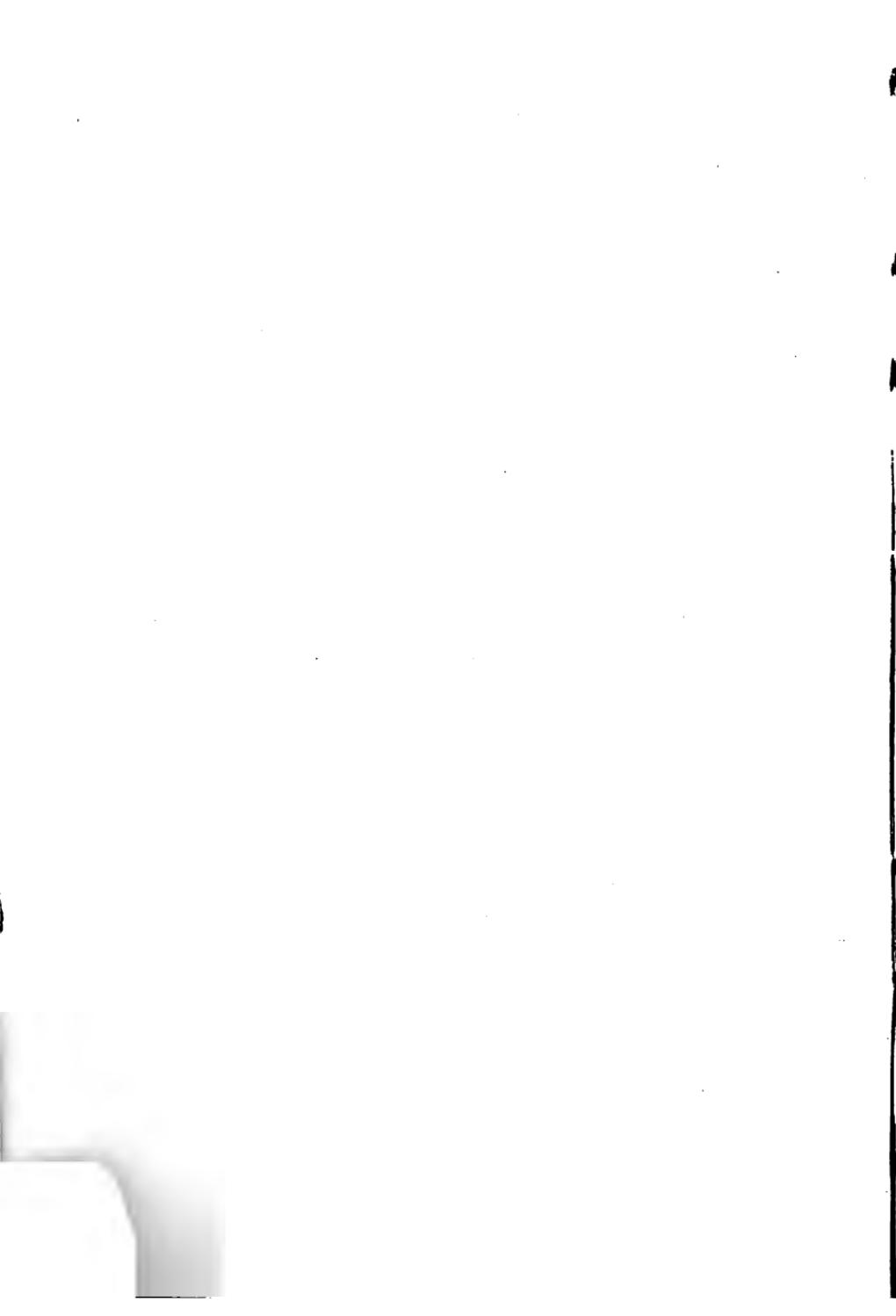
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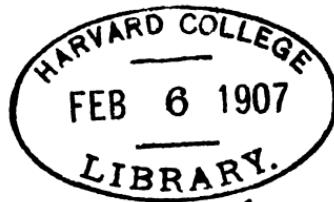
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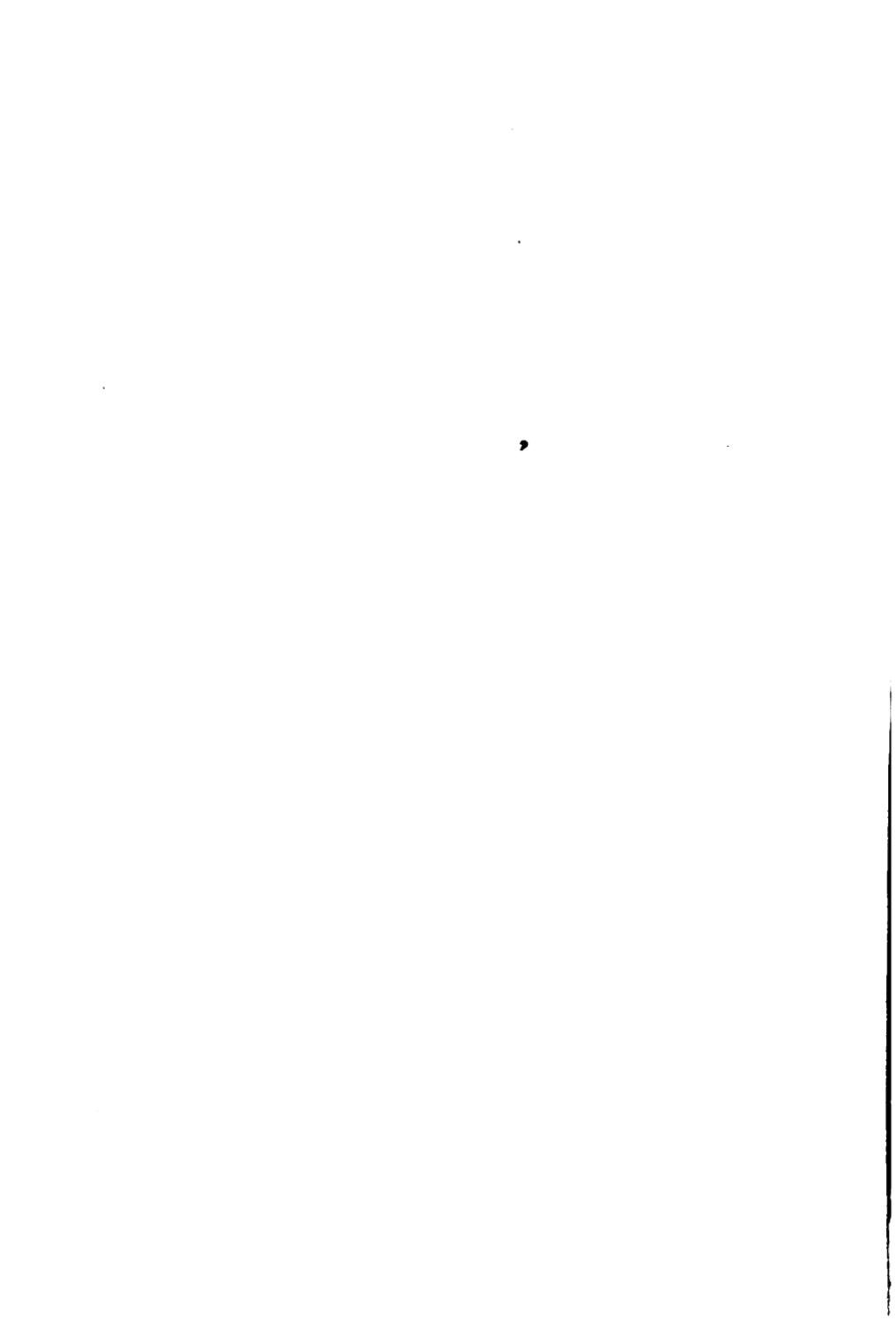
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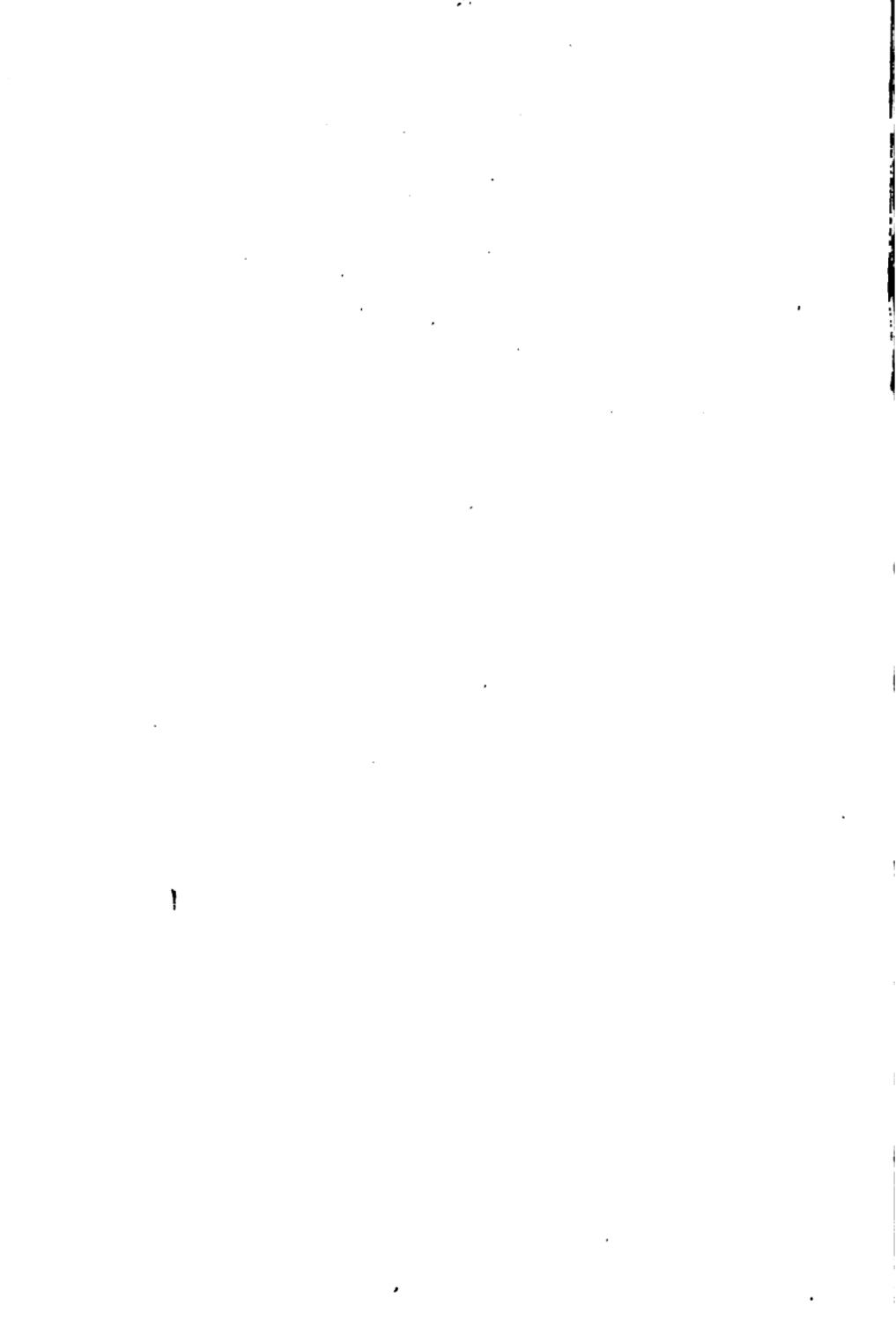
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CALDERON'S PRISONER



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CHAPTER I

“**R**EALLY, my dear Richard, I do not know what you mean. It seems to me your chance is excellent—the best.”

The young man, who would have been handsome had it not been for a certain stolidity of expression and stoutness of figure, set down his teacup in silence. Then he said:

“I believe she actually arranges to have another fellow here whenever she knows I am coming.”

“My niece,” said the lady, who, if a gigantic, masterful sheep may be imagined, resembled that animal, “is, you must remember, the most independent of beings. She is not only an American girl, but she is an orphan and an heiress. You must make allowances.”

“I make nothing else.”

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The room in which they sat spoke of simple worth. It was not in any particular tawdry; its ugliness was of a solemn, heavy sort. All the articles of furniture were of careful workmanship and so enormous that inevitably they were but few in number. The curtains were all of the very best material, and though they showed no signs of wear, gave somehow the impression of having been long in place. Indeed, one felt on entering that the massive furnishings of the room would need renewal no sooner than the eternal hills.

"Last week," the lady presently continued, with an air of encouragement, "I know she remarked that you sent her no birthday present." She hesitated a moment, debating whether or not the exclamation "What, no present from Cousin Richard! How pitiable a manœuvre!" could be truthfully interpreted as the outpouring of outraged affection.

"Oh, of course she expected it," replied the young man, gloomily. "This is the first time I have missed it for seven years."

"In my opinion," continued the other, "in the

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case of a young girl of careful bringing up, the mere fact that she did not definitely refuse is in itself equal to an acceptance."

"She only promised to think it over in order to get me out of the house. She told me so herself in so many words."

At this intelligence Mrs. Evans looked grave, almost disconcerted.

"You take her too seriously," she said, a trifle weakly. "Remember that pretty heiresses are rare, and we must admit that she had been a good deal spoiled."

"Last evening," remarked the young man, for in this conversation, as in so many others, each interlocutor followed only his own train of thought, "I asked my mother to let me take her in to dinner——"

"And she returned in the highest spirits. She told me she had never enjoyed a dinner more."

"She never spoke to me. She talked all the time to the man on her other side—a man old enough to be her grandfather. I had picked him out particularly."

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To this the lady could think of nothing to reply, and in the ensuing pause was heard the sound of horses' hoofs clattering as they came to a standstill before the door, and a moment later the subject of their conversation entered.

At first sight it seemed impossible that a creature so small and blond, so pink and white and yellow could be the source of serious anxiety to two grown people, but a second glance revealed something in the corners of the mouth that spoke of determination, perhaps of wilfulness. She was well, indeed, extravagantly well dressed, although her extravagance had taken the insidious form of rigid simplicity. Nevertheless, the sable collar and muff, which she laid aside in order to receive her cup of tea, might have alarmed a man bent on undertaking the contract of supporting her for life, heiress as she was. Richard, however, was not observant. He noticed nothing but that she was, as always, beautiful in his eyes, and that she seemed to be in the best of spirits. In truth the gay unconsciousness of her manner not a little irritated both of her auditors, but an acute observer might have found

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in her very ease an unmistakable evidence of nervousness.

"How do you do, Richard? I was driving in the park with Lily Brooks, when I suddenly remembered that you said you were coming this afternoon, and I made her bring me home at once, though she had meant to stay out until six. Aren't you flattered? I enjoyed myself so much at your mother's last evening. It was so nice of you to put me beside that delightful old gentleman—I hear you arranged the places—I found him delightful, and he was crazy about me. I appeal to maturity."

She was able successfully to run on in this way, until Mrs. Evans with solemnity arose and left the room. On this a marked silence fell on them. Alicia got up and rested her elbow on the mantle-piece. Richard, leaning on the back of a chair, his eyes fixed on the carpet, presented the picture of gloom.

At length he said, as if he were bringing out the result of long meditation:

"Well?"

Alicia looked at him, and very slowly shook her head.

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"I can't, Richard. Really, I can't. I'm sure it is just as hard on me—at least, almost as hard. Don't you suppose I'd like to think you were the right man, and to be going to marry you? I've tried to think so for the last six months. I had almost persuaded myself——"

"You had quite persuaded me."

She did not notice the rebuke. "It is what I have been expecting to do. All this year, when my friends have said that they heard that my engagement was about to be announced, I have been thinking in my heart that they were quite right; but somehow when it comes to the point I don't feel— Oh, dear, and you are so suitable in every way, and Aunt Fanny thinks you perfect, and I am so anxious to do anything—anything for a change." She stopped as if a new idea had struck her. "Perhaps that's it. It would not be much of a change to marry you, would it?"

"Why in thunder do you want a change?"

"Ah, why?" said the girl. "Because I am not happy. Is not that absurd with everything in the world I want? But I am not. I wonder if most girls

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are. I am not happy going from the dressmaker's to an Italian class, and from an Italian class to a luncheon, and from a luncheon to pay visits, and so on to dinner and the opera and a ball. Then why do I do it? Because I don't see anything else to do that I like better. I suppose I am dull, but I can't find anything different. I have no duties, and my amusements do not amuse me. And we are only young once, Richard; isn't it sickening? I wake up every morning and say to myself: 'This is the best time of your life, and you are wretched, wretched, wretched, and for no reason.' I am a horrid, discontented, stupid girl, and I am beginning to show it in my face. Look at it." She turned and regarded herself in the glass with dissatisfaction. "Oh, if you could only have made me care a little, do you suppose I would choose to go on as I am, with Uncle Matthew feeling me a 'Great Responsibility,' and Aunt Fanny fearing that I am both extravagant and flirtatious?"

"So you are flirtatious," said Richard, taking the only satisfaction that appeared to be open to him, that of speaking his mind.

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She looked at him and nodded.

“Perhaps, but you would not have thought so if you had been the right man. You would have thought it served the others right for their presumption. And how,” she added, plaintively, “was I to tell until I had at least taken you under consideration?”

“Consider it further,” he said, eagerly, “be engaged to me.”

Again she shook her head.

“I made up my mind I would never try that again,” she said.

“Again!”

“Yes, I did try it once, but it was a great mistake. It made him like me better, and I actually grew to hate him, so it was worse in the end.”

“I wish I had never seen you,” said Richard, with some spirit. “But don’t imagine I regard this as final. I shall try again, and who knows——”

“Who, indeed.”

“Alicia, do you mean you advise me to try again?”

“As your sincere well-wisher, certainly not; as

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the lady in the case, emphatically no; but as a dispassionate outsider, I cannot help observing that in these cases, persistence is often wonderfully successful."

"Oh!" he cried, with fury; and without more words left her.

When he was gone her playfulness deserted her. She sighed once or twice, more in irritation than in grief.

"It would not be much of a change," she said, aloud. "Ah, if only I knew what I wanted, or had less time to think about it."

Alicia had been an orphan since her fourteenth year. Her mother died when she was a baby; her father lived long enough to make a fortune in trade with Spanish America. To her father she had been devotedly attached, and he had never made the discovery that she was undisciplined and wilful, for throughout his life it had been her inclination to do whatever he wished. After his death, however, when she went to live with Mrs. Evans, her mother's sister, a rumor began to steal about to the effect that she had been hopelessly over-indulged. And, indeed, with

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a character no less independent than her fortune, she bore very ill the conscientious, minute authority exercised over her by her uncle and aunt.

Nor was this her only source of unhappiness. The Evanses were well-disposed people possessed of kind, if rather narrow, hearts, but they could not conceal the fact that they had hitherto fully sufficed to each other, and that a young person in the house added care and pleasure in only equal proportions, at the best. Mr. Evans had for some years given up active business, and he and his wife had arranged life in a routine so complete that any change was, as far as they were concerned, for the worse. They read the papers together in the morning, drove in the afternoon, and played cribbage in the evening. There was no long-felt want that a young person in the house could fill. Of course in her father's house, Alicia had been the pivot of everything. She did not realize for some time that in her aunt's she had no field for activity. She was provided with a home, with a certain amount of family affection, in return for which she was expected to render obedience, and a little—not too much—agreeable chatter at meal times.

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The latter Alicia could very easily provide, but the former—mere docility—seemed to be quite beyond her. In her opinion, obedience was something you rendered to those you loved, and her feeling for her aunt was, to say the most, lukewarm.

As she grew older she felt more and more the lack of occupation, the absence of that interest which is given to the lives of most of her kind by being the main object of parents' attention. This, more than natural wickedness of disposition, contributed to make her the restless and discontented creature that she had become.

Richard had not been gone many minutes when she arose and drew from her pocket-book a letter with a stamp of unfamiliar appearance. It was already open, and her eye ran through it, as if she were well acquainted with its contents.

Before she had finished the perusal of it, her aunt returned, approaching with that unmistakable air of a person about to be the recipient of an important communication.

Alicia was probably not wholly unconscious of

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this, as she put aside her letter and said with a manner politely conversational:

“You have no idea how lovely it was in the park this afternoon. I hated to come in.”

“Your cousin had been waiting for you some time.”

“Richard is so relentlessly punctual.”

“A busy man learns to be punctual.”

“How unfortunate! It wastes so much time.”

This impertinence Mrs. Evans quite properly refused to answer, and there was a long pause. Finally she said, solemnly:

“Alicia, have you nothing to tell me?”

“No, Aunt Fanny, or at least—yes, I have something which I am afraid will surprise you.” She handed her aunt the letter. “I want your consent to my spending the rest of the winter with Rosa Vargas in Central America.”

Mrs. Evans glanced at her niece with a calmness suggesting that to allow herself to be ruffled by such a proposition was to admit its possibility.

“If you wait for my consent, my dear, you will hardly get off this winter.”

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"But why not, Aunt Fanny? The climate is delightful; you knew Rosa when she was here at school and liked her, and Mr. Vargas, her husband, was in business with papa and a man he particularly liked and respected——"

"These are no reasons why you should go three thousand miles to stay with them."

"But there is no reason why I should not, and I want to, oh, so desperately, Aunt Fanny. Let us be honest with each other. You want me to marry Richard Bidgely. So does he. I can see for myself that it would be suitable, but I can't do it. I am bored, bored, with everything I do. There, don't look at me like that. It is a serious matter to be as bored as I am. Nothing could induce me to commit myself to exactly the same sort of life forever, this going from New York to Newport, from entertaining one tiresome person to being entertained by another. I know perfectly what you are going to say, that this is nothing but a phase. I give you the best proof that I agree with you in wanting to go away for a little while, to see a new country and new things. I don't believe life down there is particularly

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luxurious. I shall probably come back setting a higher value upon the comforts of home, and shall very likely be ready to fall in love with the first of my countrymen who meets me on landing. As that will probably be Richard, don't you think you had better let me go?"

"My dear Alicia," returned Aunt Fanny. "I have no power to stop you. You are of age and have your own income. The plan seems eccentric, but that of course is what recommends it to you. The modern young lady dares not be commonplace. I think it very foolish, but not actually wrong, and if it will help you to settle down with so suitable a person as Mr. Bidgely, why frankly I should be pleased. Of course I do not know what your uncle will say."

But Alicia knew exactly. He would say whatever his wife put into his head. Alicia recognized the position this lady had taken. She would not take the responsibility of definite interference with a plan that might turn out for the best, but she reserved to herself the right of subsequent recrimination.

The result was that the next day poor Mr. Bidge-
ly received the following note:

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“DEAR RICHARD: I don’t know whether to advise you to be elated or depressed at hearing that I am about to run away. I start for the republic of Santiago on Saturday, the sixteenth, to stay with Rosa Vargas for two or three months. Please don’t try to see me before I go. I have a feeling that you will not approve, and along these lines Uncle Matthew has been about as much as I can bear. On the other hand, do not fail to be on the dock to meet me when I return. You shall have due notice. In the meantime console yourself with the thought that I shall think oftener of you than of anyone else, unless we except my maid, who does not accompany me.

“ALICIA.”

CHAPTER II

SO on the sixteenth of the month a little gay group of people assembled on the pier to bid Alicia good-by—gay, that is, with the exception of Richard, who, in spite of her suggestion, had come and was standing gloomily aside. Alicia, leaning on the rail by the side of the captain's wife, under whose charge she was to make the trip, looked ready for any adventure, pretty, and brave.

“Good-by,” they called to her. “Come back in June, and don't get blown up by a volcano.”

“Don't be Mrs. President, no matter what he says. There might be a revolution, you know.”

“Don't run away to Paris with the Government funds.”

“I can't tell what I may do,” said Alicia, with a gesture that very accurately indicated her spirit.

The little vessel began to slide along the pier, and

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as the girl waved her hand in final adieu, she said to herself:

"Good-by, my dear friends. You will still be doing the same tiresome things when I come back, giving dull parties and thinking forever about your clothes, but I shall have seen a little piece of the world. Well, perhaps, I shall like you all the better when we meet again."

It was not often that the Santiago boats carried young unmarried ladies, especially beautiful blond-headed heiresses, with a reputation that no one who read the columns of the papers could be ignorant of. Even to masculine eyes such wonderful frocks were not uninteresting. If she scorned her friends for thinking continually about their clothes, the only difference between them was that she thought intently and very much to the purpose, but only once. Indeed she was not without the desire to dazzle Central America. Rosa Vargas had described the climate as a sort of perpetual spring, and contrived also to let her visitor know that she was not coming to a barbarous country, but to one where Paris dresses were well known. Spurred by this, Alicia had

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filled her trunks with a wonderful assortment of linen skirts and coats and blouses, straw hats and parasols, such as might have made Newport stare.

The voyage was uneventful. Alicia was a good sailor and stood the two days in rough northern waters fairly well. When on the third she found herself in warm weather on a sea that looked like an illuminated sapphire, the spirit of travel and adventure arose in her. She dreamed of the early explorers, and spent her days searching for the first glimpse of islands in whose coves old-time pirates were accustomed to find safe hiding-places.

The whole ship's company was soon at her beck and call. She and the captain's wife were the only women on board; the other passengers were some ten or twelve men going down to Santiago on business of one kind or another. One of them had known her father, and she was always eager to talk of him. This man, a merchant, and a young mining engineer, who was returning to work after two months of vacation, were her especial friends. They would sit beside her on deck by the hour telling what she might look forward to.

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"It is a wonderful country," said one of them, "just about as high as it is wide—two miles to the top of the highest volcano—and so fertile that if you stick a broom-handle in the ground it is bearing roses the next day; and as for the telegraph-poles, they are always in leaf, and so the company has taken to using steel rails set up on end instead. It's just as handy; instead of chopping down a tree to make a pole, you fish a rail out of the river, left when the last flood washed away the track."

"What I like about the country," said the other, "is the absolute power of the Government. It is grand. You never have to fuss with minor officials. You just go to the President and ask for what you want."

"And does he always give it to you?" asked Alicia.

"By no means, but you have the satisfaction of knowing that he always could if he liked. He and his brother run the country, you know. It happens that they were left enormously rich by their father, and so they can afford to be honest. What they want is power, and, by Jove, they get it. Not a cable nor a letter leaves that country, not a piece of land is sold,

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not a contract signed, without their knowing all about it. Oh, despotism if you like, but it is a great system."

"A delightful system for those who run it," returned Alicia, doubtfully. "Is my future host, Mr. Vargas, in the Government?"

This innocent question aroused some merriment.

"What! you are going to stay with old man Vargas? In the Government? Well, not exactly. I hear he may be in the next one, but he'll never be in this one. He stands a fair show of being the next President, if——"

"If what?"

"If he is not exiled in the meantime."

"Why should he be exiled?"

"For disagreeing with the President. That is one of the delightful privileges of the President of Santiago. He can order anyone out of the country who happens to displease him, so look out for yourself, Miss Lea."

Naturally this suggestion the more excited Alicia. Her heart warmed to her host at either supposition. Here at least she was among real flesh-and-blood

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men, who dared rebel, who dared run risks for the sake of their patriotism, and were not content to settle the matter in ugly little election-booths on a day fixed by law. She knew that Vargas had great interests in the country, and the magnificent indifference to them entailed in the mere possibility of exile thrilled her. She thought of the average Wall Street man. For what could he be induced to jeopardize his holdings?

Rosa and Mr. Vargas met her at the port. Alicia's eyes turned eagerly to him. He was a smaller man than she had imagined, but to an Anglo-Saxon very baffling in the quick courtesy of his manner and the bright impenetrability of his eyes. Alicia spoke no Spanish, but he and his wife both spoke English fluently.

She who had never seen palms or banana-trees out of a conservatory, was thrilled at the vegetation, at the flowers and the cactus-hedges along the railway. The journey took them several hours. Early in the afternoon they arrived at the Vargases' house, which stood a little out of the town on one of the foot-hills of the volcanic range which girdled the capital. It was a low, blue stucco house, covering a

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great deal of ground, surrounded by every flower and flowering bush that Alicia's northern training had taught her to value as a rarity.

Everything delighted her. For the first few days she was perfectly happy, no longer bored and listless. This, she thought, was life, this lovely brilliant country, this cloudless sky and temperate air. Even the hours of meals pleased her. She liked to be waked soon after sunrise for an early cup of coffee, so that she might see the wonderful freshness of the early morning; she was quite ready for a substantial breakfast at ten, for tea at two in the afternoon, and an early dinner, for San Miguel as a whole went to bed in good time.

She wanted at once to see the town, to start on a tour of sight-seeing, and was very much disgusted when, on her refusing to stay longer in the house, Rosa explained to her that it would be very improper for her to walk in the street alone. Nothing could be more conspicuous, and someone would be sure to speak to her. If she must have fresh air, why, Rosa, taking up a silk shawl and a parasol, would take a turn or two with her about the garden.

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Alicia appealed to Vargas:

"O Don Luis," she said, "Rosa is so lazy, and I am so energetic and anxious to see your beautiful country; I want to go through the market, and, oh, I do want to see the President! What sort of a man is he? Is he impressive? Is he nice? Is he popular?"

Vargas looked up.

"Our President," he said, "the illustrious Don José Calderon, is so beloved by his people that he has not thought it worth while to put his election to the vote for the last ten years. To understand how much confidence is implied you must know that our constitution permits one man to hold office for but four. Furthermore, the family Calderon is so able that scarcely any office of importance is held by any one outside of it. Don Mariano—no, no, Rosa," as his wife tried to stop him, "it is no harm to speak my mind of the brother. Don Mariano Calderon is commander-in-chief of the army, and is a most competent commander if the army is to be looked upon as the most potent instrument of tyranny. He has never loved his country well enough to live in it, and his fortune—for you must know that they are all

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rich—has been spent in England and France. Some years ago he presented some wonderful etchings to an English museum—etchings, just heavens! while this whole country is paralyzed by taxation——”

“At least be accurate, Luis,” his wife put in. “The Calderons are rich legitimately enough. Their father,” she added to Alicia, “made a fortune in coffee. Don Mariano is an unusually charming man.”

“Charming. And why not?” cried Vargas. “Why should he not be? What has he done all his life but live pleasantly in one European capital or another? We should never have been rejoiced by a nearer view of his charms had it not been for his accursed taste for military science. So it happened by misfortune that when his brother became—don’t ask me how—President and offered him this new toy, this miniature army of some thousands of his fellow-creatures, he could not resist it. He is thought a marvel of sacrifice. He actually left Paris and his racing-stable. He is called very hard-working, for he finds nothing in his native country worth his attention except his official duties. We are all very appreciative of his

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kindness in taking so much trouble to organize so thoroughly a fresh weapon against our freedom——”

“Ah, Luis, be careful,” said his wife, and at this, as if there were only one way, he arose and left them. Rosa looked after him in distress, and then said rather irritably to Alicia:

“I wish, dear, you would not talk politics with him. There, of course, you could not anticipate, but he is always under suspicion. A great friend of his, the editor of the *Heraldo*, has just been arrested, and the paper, in which it is known that Luis is interested, has been suppressed. The Calderons have instituted the most perfect system of spies. Our own servants may be in their pay, for all we know, and every word we say be reported. Indeed we are sure that the coachman is a Government employee.”

Alicia's eyes grew large with interest, while her Anglo-Saxon inability to take other races seriously led her to exclaim:

“How delightfully mediæval! Do you mean to tell me that my lightest word may be carried to the President and written down in a secret report? I feel

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half inclined to shout '*Viva el Presidente Vargas,*' if that is good Spanish."

"If you understood a little more about these men, you would not treat the matter so lightly," said Rosa, and refused to continue the subject.

From the veranda of the house, which stood on high ground, Alicia could look across a wide parade-ground to where about a mile away was the principal barracks of the country. This was a high square building with barred windows and iron doors. On three sides of it stretched the parade-ground, but on the fourth was an enormous coffee-plantation, growing to within a few feet of the walls. On the first afternoon of her visit Alicia was excited to see the evening drill of the army. She was not accustomed to the sight of troops, and found the light blue and silver of the Santiago uniform wonderfully picturesque. She was actually leaning on the gate watching the manœuvres when she heard herself addressed in English and saw the young Yankee mining expert who had come down on the steamer with her.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Lea," he said. "Are you

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wondering whether that handful of men could protect you in time of trouble?"

"Trouble?" said Alicia. "Do you mean war?"

"I mean revolution. Didn't you know? The town is in a ferment. Oh, not apparently, but underneath. Two papers have been suppressed and the editors have run away, or so the Government says. Some people think they will never run any farther than the vaults under the President's house. The story is that your host is as likely as anyone else to occupy one of those same vaults himself, but I see him going about very fearlessly. Of course if there is any serious trouble you would go at once to the American consul's and be quite safe."

"Do you really think there is going to be an uprising?"

The Yankee had been long enough in Central America to know that an outsider never knows anything.

"No one can tell what is going to happen. It may be serious; it may have been got up by the Government as an excuse for strengthening the army. Only half a dozen men know, and they don't say. Your

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host is probably one, and the best proof to my mind that he does not expect any disturbance is that he lets you stay here. For my part, I hope the Government wins."

"What, those dreadful Calderons?"

"Oh, their methods are not precisely ours, but they are dealing with a different people. And they are at least *men*."

That evening Alicia sounded Rosa on the subject of revolution, and was told that nothing was so unlikely.

"We live under a despotism, Alicia," she said; "but what can we do? The people are too ground down to care. Some day, perhaps——"

She stopped and Alicia dismissed the subject from her mind.

The next evening the great social event of the Santiago season was to take place—the annual ball given by the Government on the anniversary of the country's independence, an event celebrated by three days of carnival called *fiestas*. For this she had been saving herself. Here she was for the first time to

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burst upon the astonished eyes of the Central Americans. She had never taken more pains with her toilet or, to be honest, had looked more lovely. The Latin temperament, we are often told, is more enthusiastic than our own. We know that, whatever our novels say, no "murmur of admiration" in our latitudes greets the entrance of the heroine. But in Santiago it was different. If Alicia had spoken Spanish she would have heard a number of pretty, extravagant exclamations at her appearance.

The ball, which took place in the opera-house, was an extremely brilliant affair according to any standards—the women beautifully dressed, many of the men in uniform, the music excellent, the flowers profuse. Alicia was enchanted. She found herself, it is true, not a little stared at, and this without any concealment. Heads were frankly turned over shoulders to see her pass. Fortunately she did not suspect that the interest was not excited merely by the fact that she was pretty, but because she was different. Nothing is more conservative than such an assembly of Spanish Americans. Her dress, her erect bear-

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ing, her frank way of looking about her did not wholly commend themselves to men who for generations had brought their women up in another attitude toward life. It was as well she did not hear all the comments with which the room was buzzing.

Of two men standing in the doorway she was evidently the subject of conversation. One, plainly an American, cried out on seeing her:

“What a lovely being! Oh, my countrywomen! What a pleasure it is to see a well-dressed woman again! Excuse my enthusiasm, but did you notice her slippers, her little arched feet? No wonder all the nations want to marry our girls.”

“We do not all, my dear Stimson,” said the other. He was a tall man, in Santiago’s light-blue uniform, well built as to his long, slim body, and actually handsome as to his thin, dark face, yet more conspicuous than his good looks was a certain restful distinction in his bearing. “For my part,” he continued, “I would go anywhere else. I do not appreciate, or, let me say, I do not understand your young girls. They know everything—art, literature, sci-

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ence—everything better than your men do. As for the facts of life, the things that one supposes are kept from girls! Pooh, it is their glory that nothing is concealed from them."

"They are not hypocrites. I have always believed that women of other nations, your women, only *pretend* not to know."

"It is then a pretence that I value," returned the other. "One at least knows how to treat them; but with your girls—Dios! how is one to behave! They are sophisticated without being particularly wise, and pure without being particularly innocent. All the time they are talking to you of the extraordinary books they have read and plays they have seen, yet if you are led into answering them, assuming the knowledge that they so loudly claim, there is trouble at once. Such things are insults and all foreigners beasts."

"Oh, you can't expect girls to go through life blindfold."

"From my wife's eyes I should prefer to be the first to remove the bandages."

Stimson laughed.

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“You are putting a high premium on deception,” he said.

“I think,” said the native, “that all decency has been called deception. Am I over-conservative in asking some reserve in a woman’s bearing? Look at that girl now. It is a pretty creature. So everyone is saying. Do you suppose her unconscious of the conspicuousness of her position? Yet she walks around the room while we all watch. See, I catch her eye. Does she turn away? Does she blush? Not at all. She gives my look back to me, as cool and unmoved as a soldier on parade. No, no, Stimson. Give me a little mystery, a little—what is your word—archness in a woman.”

In the meantime, Alicia, with a fine air of not being very much interested, was asking Don Luis the name of the tall soldier in the doorway.

“Who looks at you like this?” said Vargas, throwing back his head and raising his eyebrows.

“Yes. Who stares, I thought, rather worse than most of your countrymen.”

“An elegant, a being from another sphere. Of course, you are curious to know his name. He is

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none other than our illustrious commander-in-chief,
Don Mariano Calderon."

"Someone should tell him that in his exalted position it is not correct to stare unoffending foreigners out of countenance."

"Tell him!" cried Vargas, bitterly. "We tell him nothing. We listen and grovel."

Nothing in this reply lessened Alicia's desire to meet the only man in the room who, on a careful survey, struck her as being in any way worthy game for her powder and shot. She was not aware of this wish at first, so much a matter of course did she consider it that he would come to be introduced. The steady look she had encountered had certainly been one of admiration. But as the evening went on and he still had not presented himself, she became aware that she was in a fair way to allow her enjoyment to be spoiled by this indifference. She had scarcely reached this humiliating admission, however, when she felt her arm touched by Rosa as she said: "Alicia, Don Mariano Calderon wishes to be introduced to you."

"It is so pleasant to hear you speak English," she

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said, as having asked her to dance, he led her away.
“I have been dancing all the evening without being
able to say a word to my partners.”

“I went to school in England.”

“So I was told.” She smiled at him as she added: “I have heard a great deal about you, Don Mariano.”

“I am sorry to hear it, considering where you are staying. You are very broad-minded to give me a dance.”

“Ah, perhaps I would not if it were not for the glory of the thing. I never before danced with a real commander-in-chief. Then, too, the uniform is perfect.”

“*A la disposicion de usted, señorita.* At your service, Miss Lea.”

“At mine? Oh, no! You know I am of the opposite party.”

He glanced at her gravely, as if he had half a mind to tell her the subject was not to be treated so lightly, but he said:

“Yes, I understood the malcontents had received a strong reinforcement from the north.” ↗

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“What, you admit you have malcontents?”

“Where is the country that has not?”

“Why then do you not do something for them?”

“We are doing the best possible. We are trying to show them how absolutely fatal to themselves any action on their part would be.”

“Fatal? I thought you had no capital punishment?”

“Nor have we, but the air of our prisons is wonderfully deadly—to our political antagonists.”

“Oh,” said the girl, with a gesture that brought her hands to her throat, “what a horribly cruel way to talk!”

“The army is not a charitable institution, señorita. There is the music. Shall we dance?”

Alicia drew back from him.

“Good heavens,” she said, “is it possible that a man can feel so and yet ask me to dance like any other man?”

“Evidently it is, señorita.”

“You actually frighten me.”

“A little timidity in the matter will do no harm.”

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“Let me understand. It is not *true* what you intimate?”

“That the air of our prisons is not healthy? It is most accurately true.”

She looked at him, and the color rose in her face through sheer righteous horror.

“Am I to believe,” she asked, “that the accounts I have heard of you are not exaggerated?”

He raised his eyebrows, pointedly refraining from questioning her.

“Am I to believe,” she went on, and though lowered, her voice shook, “the people who tell me that you do not hesitate——”

“Forgive me, but is it well to repeat to me what you hear from your host?”

“Don Luis is not the only man in Santiago who does not admire Don Mariano Calderon.”

“No, but he is the most loquacious.”

“There! You speak like a man of the world! Is civilization nothing? I stand here talking to you as I have been accustomed to talk to men at home, and yet who knows what horrible things are in your past, what poor wretches are now in your power!”

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He smiled mildly, glancing about the room, as if here and there his eye fell on those who might be so described.

"I doubt," he said, "if any government is administered according to the views of tender-hearted young American ladies."

"You cannot confuse me that way. I was brought up in a free country, and I know cruelty and tyranny when I see them. Oh, if I were a native! If I were a man! As it is I give you warning that if the opportunity should offer I would——"

"Beware of rash declarations, señorita. We shall be enemies, you know. In the meantime, shall we dance?"

"I cannot dance with you," said Alicia, passionately. "I will go back to Doña Rosa." He gave her his arm, which, for the sake of form, she just touched, and he piloted her to the Vargas, made her a bow and left her.

CHAPTER III

ALICIA had not left the ballroom before she began to repent of her frankness.

She saw that she had said a great deal where it was quite unnecessary to say anything, and had, by the very sincerity of her indignation, established a certain degree of intimacy between herself and the man she despised. She had been both extravagant and ridiculous.

Nor was anger at Don Mariano and herself her only emotion. As she had told him, she was actually frightened. She was shocked to find how completely an air of refinement could cloak the utmost barbarity, alarmed lest the world were not so safe and civilized a spot as she had been led to believe; afraid, in a word, of the essential ferocity of life. This is a shock that comes sooner or later to many women of the carefully sheltered type, and fortunate is she

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whose own husband is not the first to make the revelation.

Alicia did not argue thus, she did not indeed reason about the matter at all, but was distressed, almost humiliated, to discover how great an internal commotion could be stirred in her by a man she hoped never to see again as long as she lived. It became disagreeable to her to hear his name, and she resorted to strange little artifices to keep him out of the conversation; only to feel herself the more disturbed that she had, as it were, a secret in regard to him. The consequence was that she ceased to inquire or to be informed about the increasing uneasiness of the country. Although more curious on the subject than ever, she felt her self-respect somewhat re-established by banishing the name of Calderon from her conversation if not from her thoughts.

The day after the ball, early in the morning, the streets began to be crowded with processions of maskers, who marched about preceded by the band playing the wildest of carnival music. There were the regular Pierrots and Pantaloons, all sorts of animals, and wonderful goblins built up on frames.

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In the afternoon a great bull-fight took place. Alicia had no inclination to go, although nothing else was talked of, and the town was placarded with notices of it. Even the little children in the streets were playing at it, as our children play baseball; one little boy riding a stick decorated with bull's horns, while others ran screaming about, waving scarlet handkerchiefs. But to her the idea was of course horrible, and she contrived to fasten the blame of so dangerous a pastime upon Don Mariano. "Naturally," she said, "it is just the sight he would delight in."

Toward sunset, however, she and Rosa came to one of the parks to watch the return of the crowd from the ring—a sight worth seeing.

First, as usual, came the band, playing "Carmen" with intense enjoyment; then the matadors and picadors and toreadors in their brilliant clothes, then the President in his carriage with his children around him.

"How fond he seems of his children," Alicia whispered to Rosa.

Rosa, in reply, gave vent to a peculiar sort of sniff

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which she habitually used whenever a Calderon was praised in her presence.

“Fond!” she exclaimed. “Don’t you know they are the greatest possible protection to him? The people at large *are* fond of children; not his most relentless enemy would touch him when his children are with him.”

Alicia pondered. She was wise enough to begin to suspect that no two political parties in the world were as nearly divided between the evil and the virtuous as Rosa represented the two parties of Santiago.

After the President’s carriage the whole good-natured holiday crowd surged along, some still in masks, some merely in their best clothes, all throwing *confetti*. Alicia’s eyes travelled unceasingly to and fro, looking for a tall blue and silver figure whose advent she dreaded. When she saw him he was almost at her elbow.

He spoke first to Rosa. They evidently exchanged remarks about the bull-fight, for Rosa, though willing to believe anything against the Calderons, did not carry her politics so far as to be actively dis-

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agreeable to an agreeable man. Presently he turned to Alicia, who sat in vague emotion trying to meet the occasion with fitting indifference.

"You did not go to the bull-fight, señorita?"

This gave an excellent opportunity. She lifted her chin a little.

"Scarcely," she said.

"Ah, I see." He almost smiled. "You missed a great deal. Such courage! Such skill! It makes one marvel. I would rather see it than—a six-days' bicycle race."

She scorned to meet this jibe, and he was evidently about to move away, but at the instant someone in the crowd was seized with the brilliant idea of adding to the general hilarity by setting off giant firecrackers. Although the noise was deafening, everyone seemed enchanted. Alicia put up her hands to her ears.

"Oh, I wish they would stop," she said, with a more natural tone than Calderon had so far heard from her. He glanced at her, and then raising his hand snapped his fingers once or twice. A soldier and two policemen sprang to his side. He spoke shortly

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to them in Spanish, and they at once pushed their way into the crowd and the firecrackers ceased.

Alicia was a good deal impressed, but how, she could not say. Either the firecrackers should have been stopped anyhow by the police, or else, if they were not against the law, to stop them at all was tyranny. She said:

“Is it illegal to set off those horrid things in the public streets?”

“Oh, no. It is usual during the *fiestas*.”

“You mean they had a right to set them off?”

He smiled, not entirely pleasantly.

“No one has a right to do what is so disagreeable to you, Miss Lea. Do you not agree with me?”

She would not answer, and he, in the pause, made his adieu and sauntered away.

That evening the Vargas took her to see the fireworks, and the next day, which was Sunday, there was to be a grand review of the entire army, in pursuance, Alicia supposed, of the policy of showing the disaffected the full power of the Government.

At this the Vargas refused under any circumstances to be present, and so Alicia, loving any sort

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of a pageant, had made arrangements to go with the American consul and his wife. She said to herself, too, that having seen Calderon in positions where the natural ferocity of his nature showed to such disadvantage, it was but just that she should see him appear as well as he possibly could, and that, she took it, would be at the head of his troops.

She went off about nine in the morning, waving her parasol in farewell, her little patent-leather boots gleaming in the sun, as she ran down the Vargas' stucco steps.

On the parade-ground the whole army of Santiago was drawn up before them. It was not a large body, but, thanks to Don Mariano, it was well uniformed, well drilled, and well armed. The morning was splendid and brilliant. The troops were in three divisions—infantry, artillery, and cavalry; their light uniforms stood out against a row of deep green umbrella-shaped trees which edged the parade-ground; behind this again was a tangle of vegetation, and then the ragged line of volcanic hills, blue in the morning light.

Many carriages were drawn up in line, and there

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was a crowd on foot and on horseback. The military band was playing in the interval. The review would not begin until the arrival of the President.

Alicia had never seen anything so gay, for not only had Nature herself done her best for the scene, but every spectator was in his or her best, the women in brilliant shawls. Nothing, she thought, was ever so inspiring as the music of the band.

Then presently there was a sound of horses' feet and Don Mariano and his staff appeared upon the ground. There is no inconsistency in disliking a man's character and admiring his person; even his horsemanship, a large-minded adversary might commend. Alicia believed Calderon to be a wicked man, but her eyes dwelt upon him with pleasure. There were several historical personages whose conduct she did not admire, for whom, nevertheless, she entertained a certain romantic admiration. Her feeling now had somewhat the same conflicting qualities.

She was recalled by the voice of the consul:

"There goes the ablest man in the country," he said. "I heard him read his report to Congress the

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other day—a remarkable paper. You should have seen the army before he took charge of it—a bare-foot rabble. There was no cavalry, not much artillery, and the infantry was armed with muzzle-loaders. And now it is as well trained a body of men as you could find the world over. Most of the improvements Calderon has paid for out of his own pocket."

"Indeed," said Alicia, with suitable indifference, and then not being quite prepared to let the subject drop, she added: "One hears rather disagreeable things about him."

"Oh, yes, he has plenty of enemies. He was promoted over the heads of a number of older men. There are some, too, who resent his zeal. That is always an element to be reckoned with in any reform—the people who don't want to be reformed. But I need not tell that to a New Yorker."

"I think General Calderon has enemies outside the army."

"Oh, his political antagonists. I should think so. I remember you are with the Vargas. Well, what do you expect. They all hate and fear him—the

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strongest single factor against them. He has intelligence and courage and, worst of all, the power of attaching men to him. All the younger men who amount to anything are on his side, on the Government side."

"His popularity must be a great source of strength to his brother."

Alicia was surprised to see the consul very deliberately wink.

"Of course, if it is not the greatest weakness."

"What! does not the President like him?"

"As much as the ruling sovereign ever likes the heir-apparent."

"Do you mean he will succeed his brother?"

"To-morrow if he wanted to. There, my dear young lady, you must not let me talk like this, even to you. It is not diplomatic." And not another word could she get out of him.

Very soon the band struck up the national anthem of Santiago, and the President's carriage was seen approaching. His two children were beside him, his aides opposite, and an orderly on the box. Don Mariano rode forward to meet them. At the same instant

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there was a shot. Splinters flew from the wood of the carriage-door. Then Alicia saw Don Mariano draw his revolver and fire in the direction of the coffee-plantation. Following his aim with her eyes, she saw a running figure between the trees fall to an unrecognizable heap of rags upon the ground.

And that was all. There was scarcely a moment's delay in the projected order of things. The President's carriage wheeled into place amid the cheers of the crowd. He mounted his horse and rode boldly out into the field—a conspicuous figure—and the review began.

But not for Alicia. It was the first time she had seen death, and inflicted death made the circumstance particularly horrible. She who would have found an accident shocking enough, found this deliberate murder—murder, moreover, so coolly perpetrated by one with whom she had held conversation, unspeakably hideous.

She could not stay. She did not want to see that unmoved figure on horseback at the right of the President, nor to see the sun flash on weapons whose purpose a moment before she had been able to for-

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get. She did not want to hear the gay music or the consul's exclamations of admiration at Don Mariano's prompt action and good aim. It was no great distance, and she made the consul take her home to Rosa.

Rosa did not particularly notice her entrance, but said while taking in the last words of her French novel:

“Well, dear, was it worth while?” And then looked up as a sob greeted her in answer. Alicia, looking white and shaken, was feebly crying:

“I’ve seen a man killed, Rosa. Oh, that dreadful commander-in-chief. He shot a man. Oh, Rosa, to take life like that, without an instant’s thought! to kill him as if he were an animal!”

Rosa sprang up at once, all exclamations and questions, and at last drew a tolerably connected narrative from the girl.

“Oh, Rosa,” she ended, “why do your patriots do such things? I saw the bullet-hole in the carriage, and those little children so near. Someone hidden in the coffee-trees fired at the President, and instantly Don Mariano—he must have caught sight of the

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man—drew his revolver and killed him. I could not help seeing.” She gave a gasp.

“Patriots? it is not. It is the Calderons themselves,” cried Rosa. “Whenever they grow more than usually unpopular they get up something of this kind—have themselves shot at, and then everyone says what brave men to dare to go about unguarded! It is an old trick; and this time, for fear, I suppose, that they would be found out in it, they decided to sacrifice their tool. How do they find men low enough to serve them?”

But for all Alicia’s horror, this was a view of the case she could not fully take. She had seen the expression on the men’s faces, and how close the bullet had struck.

“The review went on, of course,” sneered Rosa, “and everyone cried out that they were intrepid to go about among the people they pretend to govern.”

“It is still going on,” said Alicia; and indeed martial music was to be heard from the parade-ground. “I could not have stayed. I saw the poor creature fall. Oh, why could they not have waited and arrested him?”

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“Because they *prefer* to kill.”

Alicia hesitated.

“Perhaps,” she said, “he was going to shoot again.”

“He was probably not going to do anything but what he was told to do. How infamous! How like them!”

Presently Don Luis came in, having heard all about the event. He treated the matter with a more convincing coolness than his wife. He seemed less certain that the attempted assassination had been planned by the Calderons, though he by no means dismissed the suggestion.

“Why should we assume any such thing?” he asked, shrugging his shoulders. “Are there not enough men in the country with courage and wrongs? I only wonder it has not happened every day.”

The incident appeared to be without special political significance, unless, perhaps, it served as a safety-valve to a good deal of suppressed ill-feeling; but to Alicia it meant a great deal. Following upon her conversation with Don Mariano at the ball, it

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deepened the already sinister impression made upon her. Every time that she saw him—and she saw him frequently, for, as if to show his confidence, he appeared more often than ever in public—she felt the same shock. His very good looks, for with his dark, worn look, the man was certainly handsome, the extreme courtesy of his salutation only reminded her the more forcibly of how different a being was beneath this conventional appearance.

After this everything began to settle down. The press assumed a more friendly tone, less violent words were heard on both sides, and even the Vargas family dropped the subject of tyranny.

CHAPTER IV

ALICIA would have found it hard to say whether or not she was happy; but one fact was perfectly evident—she was not bored, and this, for a young lady who had left New York for no better reason, was a good beginning.

She liked the pleasant leisure of the life, she was attached to Rosa, Mr. Vargas was most considerate and seemed to be delighted to have her in the house, and yet in her letters to her aunt she found it difficult to account for the strange charm that the country had for her.

When she left home she had known that Mrs. Evans did not expect her to stay until June. Both she and Richard had intimated pretty plainly that one reason why they did not more strenuously oppose her going was that they believed her first idea would be to come home again. She was well aware that a certain restraint which even she herself felt in

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her letters would be interpreted as an unsuccessful effort to conceal her homesickness.

Richard was a regular correspondent. The mail reached Santiago once a week, and with every mail came a thick packet from him. She really enjoyed hearing from him, only of late her pleasure was spoiled by a too pressing consciousness that not once since her departure had she sent him a single line.

Late one afternoon she was actually in the midst of a letter to him when she was interrupted by Don Luis, who suggested that she should come with him and his sister for a walk. There were several little points of interest in the neighborhood which, on account of their very proximity, she had not yet seen. Alicia, always energetic, was eager to be off and not at all disheartened by the fact that the chaperon of the occasion, Don Luis's elderly sister, spoke nothing but Spanish.

They did not go into town, but Don Luis led them through some beautiful gardens in the neighborhood, showed Alicia the ruins of an old Spanish church destroyed by an earthquake, and the site of a prehistoric graveyard where a great deal of gold

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and pottery had been taken out. Finally, they found themselves in front of the barracks which Alicia had so often watched from the veranda, and Don Luis suggested that perhaps Alicia would like to see the inside of it. Alicia, who wanted to see anything and everything at once, pleaded to be taken in.

Almost as soon, however, as the heavy iron doors had swung shut behind them she wished she had not come. The interior was bare and not particularly clean, the windows were few, and little more than loop-holes. A great number of men were standing about, some in plain clothes and others in uniform, and they all stared so unpleasantly, and so obviously began making remarks about her that she wondered Don Luis did not resent their conduct instead of being content to be drawn aside into conversation with an officer. She was relieved when he returned to her side and began pointing out the large guns and other objects of interest. She was, however, congratulating herself when the tour of inspection seemed to be over, but it then appeared that the vaults were still to be examined. Alicia was not enthusiastic. The idea of snakes, scorpions, and tarantulas in dark vaults was

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alarming, but she found that with darkness she did not have to contend. As they went down the stone staircase the electric light was turned on and everything was as bright as day.

They were scarcely well out of the way when a loud shout was heard above them, followed by shots, a scream, and hurried footsteps running to and fro. Don Luis, calling to the women to stay where they were, dashed up the stairs again. The next instant they heard the heavy door at the head of the stairs shut and locked behind him.

Their position was not pleasant. They were quite alone, with no means of communication with each other but gestures, while overhead the firing became almost continuous. Nor was the evident alarm of Miss Vargas very reassuring to Alicia. She could not understand the other's language, but she knew the appearance of a woman in deadly terror.

It seemed to Alicia that they were left thus a long time, though probably it was under an hour. At the end of this period their situation was rendered more unendurable by the sudden failure of the light. They were left now in total darkness. On this, poor Miss

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Vargas had hysterics, and Alicia found some occupation in quieting her.

At length—it must have been toward nine o'clock—the door above them opened, and Don Luis, with a fluttering candle in his hand, appeared at the head of the stairs. He was evidently under strong excitement, but with a show of detached calmness he explained that the garrison had mutinied and seized the building, that the barracks contained all the heavy guns of the army, and that though the loyal troops were then in process of surrounding the building, they had nothing but their rifles and one rapid-fire gun with which to attack. The Government had already cut off all telephone, light, and water connections, but the insurgents were well supplied with the two latter. He said that the position of the insurgents was very strong—would have been absolutely commanding had it not been for the fact that nearly all the ammunition for the guns they had taken with the barracks was stored in another building, which, though at no great distance, was cut off from them by the Government troops. Their only hope lay in being able to communicate immediately

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with their allies in town. They had counted on the telephone, and their plans were not a little put out by the promptitude with which this had been severed. As it was, the Government would not allow anyone to leave the barracks under any pretext whatsoever, and was evidently determined to starve the rebels out, a proposition which to Alicia looked alarmingly feasible.

"But," she said, hastily, "there will be no difficulty about my getting out. They will let me pass. I cannot stay here."

Don Luis laughed bitterly.

"You do not understand our commander. As soon as I ascertained that Don Mariano himself was outside, I sent a message under a flag of truce, explaining your position and requesting that you be allowed to pass out. But with his usual consideration he replied that anyone preferring the military prison in the town might leave the barracks, but that there was no other alternative."

"He cannot have understood," said the girl. "He could be forced to let me through the lines. I am an American—a neutral—" She stopped, remember-

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ing her own words, her declaration of hostility to the very man himself.

“He has power and likes to make it felt,” said Vargas; “that is why he is so senselessly inconveniencing you. Oh, I tremble to think of the anxiety of my poor wife!”

Alicia was never able to remember the sentences that followed, or who uttered them. She was sure only that it was she who said presently:

“But why should I stay? I could escape. In the darkness no one would see me in all probability, and even if they did, why, all the better! Then I should appeal to the American consul and the matter would be settled at once. They can’t do anything to *me*, you know.”

She remembered that at first Don Luis pooh-poohed the idea, but he was persuaded with surprising ease, and even at the time, she noticed that the preparations for her escape were made with suspicious celerity.

There was, unfortunately, a moon, shining in full tropical splendor. A narrow window about eight feet above the ground opened in the shadow of an angle

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of the wall. At this point the coffee-plantation, which Alicia had noticed from the Vargas house and through which their walk of the afternoon had led them, grew within a few feet of the barracks. There seemed an excellent chance for her being able to slip from one shadow to the other. Once within the plantation she had a fair chance to escape entirely.

At the last moment, as if it was an after-thought, Don Luis gave her a revolver and a letter to his wife. He begged her to fasten the latter inside her frock, and not to deliver it in the presence of anyone, as it might be misinterpreted. Alicia was no fool. If she had been suspicious already that she was, in some way she did not see, being made to serve the insurgent cause, she was now quite convinced of it. For a moment she hesitated. To carry messages for rebels is a serious matter. Then she recalled her high-flown and perhaps theatrical talk about liberty. She remembered how she had called upon Don Mariano to notice that if ever an opportunity presented itself—well, here was her opportunity. Was she ready to admit that she had been merely talking? She was convinced, too, that the Vargases were right; that

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the cause she was asked to further was the just one.

She moved to the window from which the bars had already been removed. Don Luis, making light of the danger and emphasizing the impossibility of her remaining where she was—no one seemed to think of poor old Miss Vargas—helped her through.

She dropped lightly to the ground and darted into the coffee.

A moment later she was dodging blue-coated soldiers in the gloom of the plantation. She realized at once how unreasoned her attempt had been, how inevitable that the very point she had selected would be the most carefully watched. Did she suppose they expected people to walk out of the front door in the full glare of the moon? Her heart sank as she saw two men closing in on her. After what she knew of the commander-in-chief, what might she expect from the common soldiery? She stood suddenly quite still, reasoning that now her only hope lay in achieving a hasty release, but also not a little because this hopeless running to and fro was undermining her courage.

They came up, two voluble young Latins, ad-

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dressing countless fluent questions, to which she answered with her only Spanish sentence:

“No habla Español.”

“Ah,” they exclaimed in commiseration, and repeated pityingly to each other: *“No habla Español,”* as if ignorance could go no farther. They continued, however, to ask her questions in that language until at last an idea seemed to occur to one of them, and after still more conversation he trotted away.

Alicia looked at her remaining guard. A ray of moonlight fell on him between the trees. He looked like a friendly little creature. She recognized at once that a woman of decision would attempt to overpower him, but she could not bring herself to consider the matter seriously. Probably if she had been thoroughly candid with herself she would have admitted that the idea struck her as not quite well-bred. On the other hand, she scorned the examples of her sex, who professed a dread of firearms, although the revolver which she had thrust into the breast of her linen coat presented itself to her as more of a menace than a protection. She was still revolving the matter

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when the first soldier returned and she saw that the worst or the best had happened, she did not know which, for Calderon was with him. He appeared to be perfectly calm, yet she noticed that he addressed her first in Spanish. Then remembering, he said:

“Are you carrying any message or paper to anyone?”

“No,” said Alicia, wondering how liars spoke so that she might use another tone.

“Good!” He turned to his soldiers and appeared to send them back to their posts, for presently he and she were left alone.

To Alicia the dismissal of her guards seemed to be the first step toward freedom, and she was already considering in which direction lay the Vargas' house. She was not surprised at his implicit belief in her statement; her mind was too much taken up with the effort it had required. She had thought her lie too desperate a step to consider whether or not it were likely to be believed. She was not in the least afraid. It is almost impossible that a woman brought up as she had been should be personally afraid of a man who is outwardly a gentleman. She was conscious

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that Don Mariano brought her near to brutal and alarming forces; she found herself shaken by the sense of power cruelly applied, but that this power could be directed against her with equal cruelty did not occur to her. The ineradicable belief of an American woman that she is mistress of a situation now led her to say:

“Which path shall I follow?” meaning: Which path will lead me most directly home? He indicated one and they pursued it in silence.

“It is not necessary for you to accompany me, Don Mariano,” she said. But her tone did not require an answer and he made none.

Presently the lights of the town began to shine between the trees and they came out of the darkness into the moonlight, but not opposite the Vargas' garden. They were at the beginning of a paved street at the entrance to the town.

Alicia stood still.

“You have misled me,” she said.

As she turned toward him in indignation, his eyes fell on the stock of the revolver, and he instantly took possession of it.

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"You will not need this now," he said, adding, "I am sufficiently armed for both."

She watched him unload it with fury, but thought it wiser to return to her first charge.

"This is not the way to the Vargases'."

"We are not going to the Vargases'."

"Where did you suppose I was going?"

"To my house."

"How absurd!—alone, and at this hour!"

He looked at her gravely a moment in silence. She found herself strangely baffled by the utter absence of anything personal in his manner. At the ball she had found him too conscious of her every look and gesture and emotion. Now he seemed scarcely aware of her bodily presence. He looked at her, she realized, merely while he considered in what terms he could most fittingly address her.

"Let me explain to you," he said at length, "the position in which you have put yourself. It is essential to the Government that no communication, written or verbal, pass between anyone within the barracks and the outside world. For this reason I refused to allow you to come out. You escaped without

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my permission and have now on your person a letter about which you would have deceived me." She would have interrupted him, but he stopped her. "It is not in the least mysterious. I suspected as much, and it rustled when I took the revolver. Men have several ways of carrying concealed letters, women but one. The letter may be quite harmless. Of that I can presently assure myself. I cannot so easily ascertain whether or not you are carrying any verbal message. This being so, I must absolutely prevent your holding communication with anyone until the insurgents surrender. This could be done, of course, by handing you over to the authorities of the military prison——"

"You seem to forget," said Alicia, "that I have some protection. I can appeal to the American consul, who would——"

"Would doubtless do his best to prevent me. For that very reason you may rest assured that he will know nothing whatsoever about your movements. There are two objections to the military prison. One, that to detain you there would be an official act. The

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other, that I am sufficiently humane to wish to spare you the experience. In my own house——”

“I should prefer the prison,” said Alicia, not, however, by any means admitting in her tone that either was inevitable, or indeed possible.

“Of that I am the better judge. But your comfort is not the only consideration. If the worst came to the worst—if, I mean, your consul should get wind of the matter—your detention in my house could be repudiated, and as a matter of fact no one in authority will know anything whatsoever about it. You, again, will not be so likely to make the matter public as if you had been legally imprisoned.”

“Not so likely!” cried Alicia; “a thousand times more likely, you mean!” He gave her an odd look.

“In this case, possibly, my brother might find himself obliged to remove me from command, as a punishment for kidnapping a beautiful young American lady. It is a risk I feel it my duty to run. Now—my time is of value—will you proceed? My house is only a block away.”

“Suppose I call for help?”

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He considered.

"The police would come and render me an assistance, which I believe I could do without."

"I could tell them the truth; they would repeat it—"

"They do not speak English, Miss Lea, and they do not—in this case I should take care they did not—repeat."

Alicia did not answer. She was considering, not very hopefully, a dash through the coffee-plantation, whither she did not know. She had imagined that her eyes did not even waver in that direction, but his voice now said:

"You must not think of running away. There is a great deal of barbed wire in the *cafetal*, over which you might easily break your neck. And now the letter, if you will be so kind." She hesitated, not knowing how to evade him, yet hating to give it into his possession. He went on:

"We are neither of us eager that I should *take* it."

With this, she drew it from her dress and flung it into his hands.

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“There it is,” she said; “I don’t know what is in it, and I give you my word that I am carrying no other message—my word of honor. I will take a steamer to-morrow away from this barbarous country, if you will only let me go.”

He shook his head.

“Oh, if you were an American man you would believe me!”

“I have no personal attitude in the matter whatsoever. *Señorita*, I cannot let you go.”

She turned to him suddenly with a spirit which heretofore her dread of his methods had held in check. It was as if she at last dared to play her last card.

“Don Mariano, are you bribable?”

“Probably I have my price.”

“I am very rich.”

“I have the same good fortune.”

“If you will let me go—and indeed you safely may—I will kiss you.”

He looked at her with a quick glance that said much. Fortunately, however, he had seen the world, and remembered into what dangerous paths the

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strange, daring, self-confident, ignorant maidenhood of the American girl will lead her. There was a moment's silence between them. Then for the first time in their acquaintance he smiled with acute appreciation of the situation.

"I am afraid my price is even higher," he said.

They now proceeded in silence, she more convinced than ever that she had been thrown into the power of a man different from any she had so far met. She could scarcely believe in so radical an indifference.

They reached a blank wall some eight feet high, and at a gate in it Don Mariano stopped and unlocked it. At a gesture from him she passed through. She found herself in a court paved with cobblestones. Across one side was a long, low building, like most of the houses she had seen.

"What is this place?"

"The back entrance to my house."

"I am to be kept here?"

He bowed and unlocked the door of the house.

"May I ask what your family will think?"

"I have no family."

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"Your servants, then?"

"Only one will know, and she never thinks."

On one side of the main door was a room separated from the rest of the house. To this he guided her, and snapped an electric switch. It was barely furnished, and was principally remarkable for having no windows; near the ceiling was a barred opening about a foot in height. It was all very clean. A little white iron bedstead, of familiar American make, stood in one corner. Don Mariano's prisoners were not, it seemed, subjected to extreme hardships.

"The old woman who brings you your meals," said Calderon, thoughtfully, "is a feeble old creature. It will at once occur to you that nothing would be more easy than to overpower her and escape. I therefore call to your attention the fact that a sentry is stationed at each door of the house, and I shall give very simple orders that you are not to escape at any cost. I wish you good-night, señorita." He made her a formal, military bow.

"One moment. This old woman—she speaks English?"

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“Not a word.”

“But if I am not comfortable, if I am ill, if——”

“You must send for me. Say my name to her, and she will understand. Again, good-night.”

She did not trouble to reply. The next minute she heard him lock the door behind him.

Standing alone in the middle of the floor, she looked blankly about her and exclaimed, aloud:

“What in the world would Richard say if he could see me now!”

CHAPTER V

WHEN it actually came to the point of putting out the light and going to bed, Alicia barricaded the door with a chair hooked under the handle and examined the barred aperture at the ceiling to assure herself that no one could get in.

She was, in a word, distinctly nervous. Strangely enough, although she had sufficient cause to be definitely and actively afraid, the dread of personal violence was not in her mind. Her alarm was of a vague, childish sort—part strangeness, part loneliness. It made common objects look unfamiliar and menacing, but it did not suggest any precise danger.

In the course of time she fell asleep and slept soundly until the old woman came in, in the morning, with her coffee.

This old person, in spite of the difficulties of language, managed to convey to Alicia her entire friendliness and interest. She was by far the most

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typical inhabitant of Santiago that the girl had so far seen. She wore a clean blue cotton skirt and white chemise, a coffee-colored handkerchief was folded across her shoulders and pinned at her breast, a black velvet ribbon was around her neck, and her gray hair was braided down her back.

In addition to coffee and bread and butter, she brought Alicia a pile of English, French, and American magazines. There was something actually luxurious in sitting up in bed, sipping well-made coffee, and glancing over the current periodicals. All the food, Alicia noted, was better than the Vargas'. The china and silver were above the ordinary. The old woman returned presently to make the bed; and when she had taken away the breakfast-tray, Alicia realized she was now left alone to spend the day as best she could.

She got up and dressed, feeling refreshed and inspirited. Needless to say her first thought was of escape, not so much from a desire to get away, though this was present, as from the recognition that escape was the conventional aim of all prisoners, especially of damsels detained against their

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wills. That, as Calderon had suggested, the overpowering of old Julia would not be difficult was evident at once, but there was something unutterably disagreeable in the idea of laying hands on the amiable old thing. This, more than the dread of the sentries outside, deterred her. At this point, however, the idea occurred to her that she was not sure, after all, whether there were sentries. Perhaps Don Mariano had merely hoped to intimidate her by the threat. She owed it to herself to make sure.

To this end she removed everything from a good-sized table that stood in the corner, and lifted it with something of a struggle to the bed. The legs came alarmingly near the edge, and she felt the utmost reluctance to committing herself to it; but reminding herself how small a danger was this in comparison to those which she must presently face if she really intended to escape, she climbed bravely up, to find her eyes still several inches below the aperture. She tried the pile of magazines, but they were not high enough. Nothing remained but her solitary chair, and, in spite of the likelihood of disaster, she now placed this on top of the table. With

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the greatest caution she managed to reach the top of this vantage-ground, and peering out between the bars was disgusted to find a soldier standing but a short distance away.

While she was still looking about her she saw Calderon come quickly out of the house and to the door of her room, and before she had time to move he had knocked and immediately opened the door.

His eyes travelled about the room in search of her, and then up and up for an appreciable length of time before he finally saw her and smiled. For the first time she was struck by something pleasant, distinctly human, in his expression. He said nothing at all, but held out his hand to help her down.

Inwardly infuriated at being found in so undignified a position, Alicia said, coldly:

“Thank you, I can manage better alone,” and at this, as if in sheer spite, the chair began to slip on the table and she found herself glad that her fate was no worse than to be precipitated into Calderon’s arms.

The power not only of success, but of mere competence in little things, is something enormously ef-

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fective with most women. Alicia was surprised into admiring the dexterity and strength with which he caught her. Immediately he set her on her feet with perfect gravity and began returning the furniture to its normal positions.

"I hope you won't do that again, señorita," he said. "It is scarcely safe."

"My whole position here——"

"Is absolutely safe. How have you"—he paused a bare instant over the English idiom—"been making out?"

"What an absurd question to ask me!" she returned, aware that in the face of his determined politeness—for his manner was wonderfully finished and courteous—her own pride began to look unfortunately like sulkiness.

"You slept well?"

She longed to be able to say that she had not closed her eyes, but was obliged to emit a martyr's "Yes."

"I'm glad to hear it; I was afraid you might be nervous. May I sit down?" Alicia, who would have shrugged her shoulders but did not quite dare,

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said nothing, but indicated her consent, and he seated himself sideways on the table.

“You will be interested to hear with whom I have been in conversation—the American consul.”

“Oh,” cried Alicia, surprised into being perfectly natural, “he is interesting himself in my case?”

“Interesting himself!” returned Calderon, with a gesture. “That but faintly expresses his activity.”

“He knows——”

“He is full of the most exciting misinformation.”

She would not smile, but met his eyes gravely.

“If it is not too much to ask, I should be glad to know what steps are being taken in my behalf?”

“It is for the purpose of telling you that I am here.” He sat on the table, very slim and at his ease, raising his eyes to the ceiling as if to inspire his memory. “El Señor Consul visited me at seven o’clock this morning, at which hour I was with the troops, where he eventually found me. Usually we are the best of friends, but to-day I noticed at once that he was inclined to be, as you say, *short* with me. He said he understood that a countrywoman of his was shut up in the barracks and that I, in the

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capacity of commanding officer, had refused to allow her egress. (He used the most beautiful words, *señorita*; I scarcely do him justice.) I had to admit the truth of what he said, on which he told me that he had thought better of me than to believe that I would allow an innocent girl to remain an hour in such a position. I replied that you had not only gone to the barracks at a critical time in the company of a celebrated revolutionist, but that I myself had heard you express in public views hostile to the Government. He answered—Oh, *señorita*, you would have blushed to hear him—that I ought to be too much a man of the world to imagine that an American woman would lend herself to any such movement. He spoke of your host—your *late* host, I mean—in terms I could not repeat. The upshot of the matter was that after a long discussion and as a special favor to him and the great country he represents, I finally agreed to let you *come out*.” He bent forward, trying to make her smile, and she only avoided doing so by turning her eyes from his. He went on: “We parted with mutual expressions of esteem. He told me that if everyone in the coun-

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try were as enlightened and courteous as myself, he would not exchange his present post for the Court of St. James. For two hours he let me go about my business—and with a foreboding that the matter was not entirely settled, I did a great deal of work in the time—and then he came to me in this very house, bringing startling intelligence. It appears, señorita, that you *are not in the barracks*. He had scarcely made this clear to me when Doña Rosa herself appeared—a most charming woman is Doña Rosa. She is very anxious about your safety. I regretted sincerely not being able to relieve her.

“We held a long consultation; we must have talked more than an hour. Doña Rosa, though she tried to conceal it, fears that you are still in the barracks and that they are trying to deceive the outside world with the intention of making use of you as a messenger in the near future. The consul, however, scorned such a suggestion. He said they would not dare run such a risk. No one in Santiago had laid eyes on you, it seems, since your visit to the barracks. Nevertheless, at the request of the

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consul I am leaving no stone unturned. With my written permit he is now searching the military prison and the jail. If he finds you, he has my authority to set you at liberty. I could not speak him fairer than that, could I? By the way, I did you a good turn, something that I am sure you will appreciate. I volunteered, if you were in the barracks, to get your trunk to you. Doña Rosa is in a great state of mind to know what you will do without your things. So it is to be sent here to me to-day and I am to do my best to get it to you. Is there not some consolation in your own trunk?"

"You actually dared to hold such a conversation in this very house where I am a prisoner? Suppose I had screamed—called in English for help, as I am always thinking of doing?"

"That is the point I am coming to." He slipped off the table and, standing in front of her, said seriously: "Miss Lea, you must not scream. You must do nothing to put yourself upon an official basis. As you are perhaps aware, the letter taken from you was as compromising a document as can well be imagined——"

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"I do not read Spanish."

"Ah, no; and this was in cipher—a cipher, fortunately, of which we have long had the key. As I was saying, if you should scream and succeed in making yourself heard by, let us say, the consul, one of two things will happen; either I shall be able to pacify him and stave him off, in which you will be no better off, or else he will be obliged to go to my brother, the President, about it, and then *you* will be a great deal worse off; how badly you probably do not understand. I should be forced at once to put that letter into the President's hands as the excuse for my action. Now, señorita, there is nothing that you or anyone could say that would explain away that letter. My brother is—what shall I say?—has the welfare of the country even more at heart than I have. If you think my measures unjustified, I do not know what you would say of his. I know of nothing at which he would so much as hesitate, and as for your well-being—! There are other reasons why I should be sorry to see your prison change from my house to his. In short, you must not do anything to put yourself in his direct power."

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"I do not understand you," said Alicia, actually trembling with disgust. Their eyes met—hers defiant, his steady.

"One thing I believe you do understand," he said, "that in this house you are quite safe and comparatively comfortable. You will not be released at present, and any change in the form of your imprisonment will be for the worse. I beg of you to force no change. Ah, there is your breakfast."

With this he rose and left her.

It was but natural that, as the afternoon wore on, time began to drag sadly. There was nothing that could possibly break the monotony of her position except another visit from her jailer. "He could not have the impertinence to force himself upon me twice in the same day," she said, and doubtless it was dread that led her to strain her ears at every footstep.

It was an impertinence of which he was not guilty. Alicia might have settled to the perusal of her magazines in perfect safety. As it was, her distracted attention rendered the evening even longer than it need have been.

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Not until the next morning at the same hour did he reappear, and then he laid two letters on the table.

“Your mail, Miss Lea,” he said.

She looked up pleased, but puzzled. The Vargas family had a box at the post-office, of which Don Luis took care that no one but himself had the key. She had been not a little fretted at the loss of her week's letters. “Oh,” she cried, “you got them from Rosa?”

“I got them from the postmaster.”

She looked confused.

“There is nothing complicated. Some time ago I told him to hold all letters addressed to you until I came for them. Well, to-day I came.”

“But they are addressed in Don Luis's care!”

“Yes, that made it all the easier. We are accustomed to keeping our eye on Don Luis's correspondence.”

“You do not know how contemptibly such a system strikes an American.”

He smiled.

“And yet,” he said, “you will admit it has its advantages.”

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She took the letters up in silence. One was from her aunt, the other in the heavy, solemn handwriting of Richard. It reproached her like an unreceipted bill. She made an agreement instantly with herself to spend some of her leisure in answering this packet.

"I have been meaning to ask you," Calderon went on, "when you had originally intended to sail for home?"

Alicia debated whether or not he had any right to ask such a question, and then was graciously pleased to answer, "Not until next month."

"Ah, very good." He appeared to think. "The present situation cannot continue more than a week at the utmost——"

"Oh, indeed! You look for success or failure within that time?"

"No, I look for success."

"You are very confident."

"I have every reason to be. The day that I release you, for of course you understand that the day that the barracks surrenders you are set at liberty—you must be out of the country."

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“I will think it over,” returned Alicia, with a temperate air of meditation. “I may prefer to go back to the Vargases. You seem to forget, General Calderon, that when you release me, your power over me ceases.”

“Not exactly. Of course, when you reach home you will do whatever you and your friends think best, even if this be to place the whole thing before the State Department. How the incident of the Vargas letter will be regarded even by your compatriots—however, that is not my affair. But it is my affair that you should not again be seen in this country, and for that I shall take care to arrange. We will not have any immediate trouble with your diligent consul, nor yet do I propose that you should be asked where you have spent the days since you escaped from the barracks. No, please do not interrupt me until you understand. If you will not be influenced by consideration for yourself in the matter, perhaps you will be for the Vargases. Of course you brand him as a traitor as soon as you open your mouth. Remember that I retain the letter in

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his handwriting, and shall produce it as my own justification the moment you speak."

"I do not know what was in the letter."

"Enough to hang Don Luis."

"I do not know what is happening, or what to hope for, or what to fear," said Alicia, with sudden anger. "It seems to be part of your system to keep me in ignorance of everything I want to know."

"Now that is most unjust," said Calderon, gently. "Did I not tell you everything that happened in my interview with the consul and Doña Rosa?"

"Only because you thought it would annoy and frighten me and make me feel how helpless I was, and how clever a jailer you were."

Calderon looked grave.

"I hoped it would amuse you, señorita," he said, politely. "I am quite ready to tell you anything you wish to know. The situation has not changed—cannot change until they make up their minds to surrender. They have supplies for five or six days more, and in the meantime they are trying their best to establish communications with the out-

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side. They have tried several methods since they became persuaded that your letter miscarried. A second messenger, with a verbal message, for no writing was found on him, fell into our hands. They have tried signalling from the roof, but the signallers were particularly easy to pick off; our sharpshooters are very good. Besides, those who received the message were always caught. There is nothing further for them to do. They know that as well as I do. What they do not know, however, is that I have one siege gun, heavy enough to batter down their doors whenever I make up my mind to. You are fond of accusing me of brutality, señorita. Is not that humane—to wait? The instant the barracks surrender you must leave the country. The Vargases, or rather Don Luis, will easily believe that you have already done so, that you escaped to the coast the day before yesterday. You will do so within a day or two, I hope. In the meantime, it would be well to write your family a line notifying them to look for your early return. If you will write the letter, I will have it posted at once."

To all this Alicia had nothing to say. It seemed

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sensible enough, particularly what he said about incriminating Don Luis, so she obediently took up a pen and wrote a short note to her aunt, telling her that she thought on the whole she had seen enough of the country and would be ready to come home sooner than she had supposed—the next week, or the week after. Then she took another sheet, observing that Calderon had picked up a magazine while he was waiting, and began:

“**MY DEAR RICHARD:** Are you very resentful at my not having answered one of your letters? I am six in your debt. Forgive me, because this single one brings you word of my return——”

So far she had proceeded when the cool voice of Don Mariano interrupted her:

“You know, of course, that I must read anything that you write before it can be posted. This one is finished?” He stretched out his hand.

“Of course I knew no such thing,” said Alicia. “I forgot that reading other people’s letters was part of your system of government.” She tossed him her letter to her aunt. “Pray take it,” she said. “I hope you will find it interesting.” She at-

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tempted to go on with the other, but it now wore a different look. A long silence followed. She tried hopelessly to think of sentences that would appease Richard, and yet be meaningless to the eyes of Don Mariano. At last she threw down her pen in disgust, and arose.

"It is quite impossible to write under such circumstances," she said. "If you must read, you had better write them."

"With all the pleasure in the world," said Calderon, rising with alacrity. Her little bursts of temper always seemed to leave him peculiarly suave and at his ease. "I pride myself upon my abilities as a letter-writer. Let me see; what has been said—(Will you write if I dictate?)—'My dear Richard'—Richard is your brother?"

"No."

"Ah, I see. Your *fiancé*!"

"Certainly not. My cousin."

"Oh, I understand. May I see how you have begun, so that I may get an idea?"

"You won't get much of an idea from that," said Alicia, amused in spite of herself to see how

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this barbarous alien would approach Richard in all his dignity.

“ ‘Are you very resentful’—h’m—h’m—‘six in your debt’—‘brings you word of my return.’ Now if I were you I should not assume that your return would compensate him for six letters, and letters of such a size. Oh, I am under no misapprehension. It *will* compensate him, of course, but I should take another tone. I should say:

“ ‘Dear Richard: Your six unanswered letters are before me——’ ”

“They are not,” said Alicia; “they could not be. I tore the first four up, and lost the fifth.”

“In your mind’s eye, Miss Lea. Richard must have imagination: ‘—— are before me and seem to say that you will never write again to your ungrateful cousin. I will not give you the opportunity to punish me so heavily’ ” (Alicia snorted contemptuously at this idea, if a heroine may be permitted to do anything so unromantic), “ ‘for I am coming home next week, or perhaps the week after. So, my dear Richard, ends the expedition of which you so cordially disapproved——’ ”

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"Why, what makes you think he disapproved?"

"Richards are the same the world over. They always disapprove, especially of going away. Shall we add: Can it be that your disapproval has had something to do with spoiling my enjoyment?"

"Certainly not," said Alicia, "Richard's head would be completely turned by any such suggestion. I shall sign it here."

She signed and handed it to him, to find that he was smiling at her.

"And you have talked of *my* brutality," he said.

But Alicia was already regretting her momentary friendliness, and said, coldly:

"I do not talk of it or of anything else with you, General Calderon, when I can avoid doing so."

His brow contracted slightly; he picked up the letters and said, formally:

"Is there anything further that I can do for you?"

"Yes," said Alicia, rising, too, her voice not wholly under her control. "Of course I may be obliged to send for you in the capacity of interpreter, but until I do——"

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"I understand," he answered, kindly. "I will not come again. Good-by, señorita."

She just bent her head.

She did not need the quick click of the turning lock to tell her that she had been hasty and unwise. For the sake of attaining one little victory, in order to be in the position, even as a captive, to dismiss, she had sacrificed her only chance of obtaining information. She knew without being told that Calderon would not come back without being sent for. At the moment to send for him appeared an absolute impossibility. And yet immediately she had need of him. Everywhere she turned she foresaw horrors. If the revolution was successful, the Calderons would be killed or driven out of the country, and in that case, since no one knew of her whereabouts, who could tell how long she might languish undiscovered? Or else, perhaps the house would be stormed and she rescued in full publicity, and here was an adventure to cling to her for the rest of her life—to be hinted at whenever her name was mentioned.

On the other hand, if the revolution failed, the

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leaders would fall into the hands of the Government, and her late host, her friend's husband, the man at whose table she had sat, would by her own agency, be subjected to what unknown horrors! Again and again the picture of the review came before her, and she saw the crumpled heap that an instant before had attempted the President's life. Would Vargas fall like that, or was something worse in store for him?

She tried feebly to combine the different impressions of Calderon that the last week had supplied. At first it had been simple enough. He had startled her by showing her how sinister a barbarism could be cloaked by a polished exterior. This was startling, but not confusing. Now, however, she was obliged to think further. He had treated her with a certain consideration. She realized that with all his hardness he was capable of a sort of temperance. And yet it was this very temperance that in her heart she complained of. She found herself baffled by what, for lack of a better name, she called his impersonality. An American man under the same circumstances would have succeeded in conveying

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to her that, while too noble to take advantage of the situation, he was keenly aware that it had advantages, that he was only regretting that they could not have met under happier auspices. Not that she wished, or would have tolerated, the slightest approach to love-making from Calderon, but she would have liked some recognition of her individuality. She did not in the least understand that to him there was no pleasant, trifling intermediary space between courtesy and courtship. All her life she had been petted and spoiled by everyone with whom she came in contact. And now she missed something—something, perhaps, which she could repel. She knew he was behaving exactly as a man of honor should (given that a man of honor could get into such a position), but she, too, had honorable qualities which she would have been proud to exercise. What did he think about her, what was his attitude? That she was just a human being, whom, for state reasons, it was necessary to detain? This simple and obvious conclusion did not seem to her to cover the facts.

Nothing can be more ignominious than to listen

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longingly for the footstep of your captor. Yet such at the end of twenty-four hours was Alicia's state of mind.

She had nothing whatsoever to do—in this she found the explanation. She looked at her watch at the hour and at the half hour, and could not believe that only thirty minutes had passed. She tried to amuse herself with plans for escape, but knew that they were never to be put in practice, and her mind slipped away to the more pressing consideration of unexpected happenings that might force Don Mariano to break his word and return. Needless to say that the idea of sending for him repeatedly presented itself, but she dismissed it quickly; yet not so quickly but what a dozen plausible pretexts occurred to her. A day as long as a lifetime went past and she looked forward to—how many more? By the evening of the first day she was ready either to be dragged to justice or rescued, so long as this limitless monotony was put an end to.

CHAPTER VI

IT was not surprising that by the morning of the fourth day her mind turned more and more toward the possibility of escape. At first doubtfully, then with more and more determination.

Did Don Mariano suppose she was utterly spiritless, she asked herself, that he was willing to leave her day after day without thinking it necessary to look to her security? Did he suppose escape was out of the question? Did he fancy that all women were like chickens—that you drew a chalk line about them, and they would not try to step over? Why, if she cared to try, doubtless it could be managed! Perhaps he trusted to her friendlessness and supposed she would not know what to do if she did succeed. She knew very well what she would do. She would slip unseen to Rosa's home, tell her all, and be guided by her judgment.

And then full-fledged, a simple expedient for es-

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cape leaped into her mind. If laying violent hands on Julia were repulsive to her, this obviated such a proceeding. It was simplicity itself.

The old woman brought in her dinner at half past six, but did not return for the tray until almost eight. By this time night had of course fallen.

This evening when she returned she found the room in darkness; she turned on the electricity. No one was visible. The four bare walls appeared to enclose no hiding-place. Julia cast one hasty glance under the bed. No one was there. Then, uttering piercing yells, she fled as it had been intended she should, leaving the door open behind her.

Immediately Alicia emerged from her position between the spring-bed and the mattress. She wasted no time, and the process left the bed a wreck of its former self. She knew her time was short, that even now Julia was summoning the assistance of anyone who happened to be in the house. So she ran quickly across the paved court and touched the arm of the sentry. In her open hands she was carrying all the money she had, including even that which she had reserved for her trip home. It was in shining Ameri-

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can gold pieces. She spoke no Spanish, but her gesture was eloquent enough. The man understood, for though he shook his head, his eyes rested longingly on the coins. She let them slip from one hand to the other, and held them out again with no better result.

Then the hope occurred to her that perhaps he would be more attracted to jewelry than to hard cash. Old Julia's voice could still be heard in the house. Alicia undid a fine gold chain set with pearls which she always wore about her throat, and offered it to the soldier. There was a moment's pause. He evidently wavered. She pressed it on him, and saw with joy that he had yielded: One hand went out to take it, while the other flew to the lock of the door.

For an instant Alicia seemed to know again what it was to be free, then a cool voice behind her broke in:

“What faith you have in the efficacy of bribes!”

Calderon was advancing across the court, and Alicia recognized a leisureliness in his movements for which she hated him. It was as if he wished to emphasize the fact that the occasion was not important,

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that there had never been any real likelihood of her escaping, that there was no hurry. She resented his insolence even while the first bitterness of disappointment was upon her. She gave him no answer. She could think of nothing sufficiently biting, but her manner suggested an infinite self-control.

They now moved again toward her late prison. He looked about the room with interest. The mattress half tossed upon the floor suggested plainly enough the place of her concealment. She saw that he took in her whole scheme.

He shut the door and leaned his shoulder against it.

“Miss Lea,” he said, “I should like to call your attention to these facts: You have attempted to escape, and have met with what, under the circumstances, was a remarkable degree of good luck, more than you would ever have again. What have you accomplished? Poor old Julia is having hysterics in the kitchen for fear I shall hold her responsible——”

She turned on him quickly.

“Believe me, I regret both the nervousness of

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Julia's temperament and the violence of yours, but——”

“I merely call your attention to the results of your day's work—Julia in hysterics, and this poor chap outside ruined.”

“Ruined! Why?”

“You suppose he will again enjoy my good opinion?”

Alicia took the small revenge that came to her. “Oh,” she said, politely, “not enjoying your good opinion is ruin?”

“It is no small calamity in the army which I command.”

“I sympathize with him most earnestly. By the way, he did not take a bribe.”

“No, I was merciful enough to speak in time to prevent him.”

“He did not take it, and you cannot be sure that he would have taken it.”

“He will never again be in a position where it matters whether he takes bribes or not. The man is ruined, and you are not at liberty.”

To be foiled and mocked at the same time is more

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than human forbearance can stand. Alicia lost her temper.

“I will not be held responsible,” she said, “for your own hateful, narrow, inhuman condemnation of him.”

“But of course you *are* responsible. You are responsible for having offered this poor creature a bribe which he could not be expected to refuse and to accept which was ruin.”

“Exactly. Then if you see so clearly that he could not be expected to stand the test, you should the more easily forgive him.”

“Forgive him! You speak like a nursery governess. I find, thanks to you, that this man is unfit for his duty. I therefore discard him. He is free to find something to which he is better adapted. There is as much question of forgiving him as of forgiving a defective gun.”

“Very logical, no doubt. He would, though, in all probability, be stronger than a man who had never been tempted.”

“I am a soldier, Miss Lea, not a philanthropist.”

“Very well,” said Alicia, crossly. “Pray direct

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your army to please yourself. I don't know why you think it necessary to scold me because your own men are not up to the standard you desire."

"Then let me tell you why. It angers me that, having sacrificed the honor of an ignorant man to your own restlessness, you accuse me of cruelty because the whole incident cannot be wiped out. It is the habit of your sex, señorita, to seize the thing they desire at any cost and trust to their own powers afterward to set everything right. If there has been any selfishness or hardness displayed to-night, it has been yours. Only one kindness has been done, and that was by me, when I spoke before money had actually changed hands."

"It must be delightful," said Alicia, "so thoroughly to approve of one's own conduct. As we are not entirely agreed in the matter, perhaps you will let me wish you good-night."

She had found it so satisfactory to dismiss him before that she naturally hoped for the same pleasure again. But now, unfortunately, as she met his somewhat masterful glance, she realized that even in this exercise of power she was not free, that she

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was asking a favor, and that her satisfaction was derived merely from asking it ungraciously. The suggestion was emphasized by the very slight smile with which he favored her before he took his departure.

It was scarcely to be expected that she should sleep after such a beginning to the night. Perhaps she would have been wiser not to try. In any case, she would have met with little success. She tossed and flung herself about until daylight. As the first streak of light began to shine in at the aperture in the wall she fell into a doze and awoke half an hour later to one single absorbing fact—pain.

Worry, nervousness, excitement, physical exhaustion, and some tears had brought on an acute attack of neuralgia.

She lay quite still, scarcely breathing. Julia came in, but her voluble solicitude drew no response. Indeed, Alicia was incapable of taking in any outside impression, and the old woman might have run out now leaving the door unlocked, or even open, without the girl's being able to take advantage of her carelessness.

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This particular indiscretion, however, Julia did not commit. She contented herself with seeking Calderon, who was about to ride forth for his day's work at the barracks, and informing him, with many protestations, that the "blanchita" was dying. The consequence was that an instant later he was standing at her bedside.

Even through a fog of pain she was probably aware that the clank of a sabre did not attach to Julia's person, but she did not open her eyes until her hand was taken and in many soothing and commiserating phrases she was exhorted to say what was the matter with her. Then she lifted her lids, and summoning all her faculties, explained that it was only neuralgia, and that she would be all right if she could sleep.

She heard directions given to Julia, and presently something was held to her lips, and from sheer lack of will she drank it. She was aware that life became a little easier, that awnings were stretched to keep out the hot band of sunlight on the opposite wall, a buzzing breeze cooled the air, a breeze that she was too much absorbed to connect with an electric fan. Julia

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was moving about the room carrying out the instructions of the blue and silver figure who still stood beside her. Then the pain began to grow not less, but more bearable, and then she fell asleep.

An hour later she awoke, dazed, slow in mind, but free from pain; she awoke to find her hand still held—or was it possible that her own fingers closed the more securely?—by the same strong, thin hand. He was standing in exactly the same attitude; he had not moved a muscle.

She opened her eyes, looked at him, and said:

“Why did you shoot that man?” Then more fully recalled to life by his puzzled look, she withdrew her hand, and asked, “How long have I been asleep?”

“About an hour.”

“And you have been standing there ever since?”

“Why, sabres are not very good things in a sick-room,” he answered, and as if in proof of his statement he pulled a chair toward him, and at the movement there was not a little clanking.

For a moment she said nothing. She was going over the facts with returning consciousness. Pain, a

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wonderful leveller of convention, had now gone, and she was prepared to be horrified at her own conduct. She slowly and very deeply blushed, a blush that had the look of resentment, as she said:

“You promised that you would not again come unless I expressly sent for you.”

He sprang up and asked with a directness almost fierce:

“You mean you wish me to go?”

“Yes, of course.”

He gave her no time to consider, but strode to the door. Nevertheless, even while he crossed the room, she realized that in her weak and friendless state she was not, after all, so very eager to see the last of him.

It was with his hand on the door that he suddenly stopped.

“I will *not* go,” he said. “You are not fit to be left alone. It is not right.” He paused, evidently expecting her to protest, but, as she felt it quite impossible to speak without bursting into tears, she continued silent, and he went on:

“I have tried so far to behave as you seemed to

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wish—to do what you liked, but what is the use?
Nothing pleases you, nothing I do is right."

At this she managed to say:

"My position is not easy."

"Nor mine," he returned, quickly. "Do you suppose that I do not know or care what you are going through? Am I blind or an idiot not to know to what you have been brought up? Grant my contention for a moment that I was compelled to imprison you, do you suppose that it is nothing to me; or that I forget as I ride about that accursed armory that you are here forlorn and frightened? What, not frightened? Then only because you are the most spirited woman in the world. I ask you what am I to do? Should I go away and leave you, knowing as I do that you are capable of dying rather than send for me? Or should I come back to see that you are taken care of, at the risk of distressing and alarming you and making you hate me more? Everything I do is wrong in your eyes, therefore had I not better do what is right in my own?"

There was a pause, and then Alicia said, feebly:
"I know that you have shown me a certain con-

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sideration, for which I am grateful. To-day you have been kind. I wish to thank you." She was aware of the utter inefficiency of a manner she had intended to be merely free from too much *empreserment*.

"There?" he cried, "was anything ever more reluctant? I have done absolutely nothing; in mere humanity I could not well have done less, yet you hate me so much that you cannot bear to be under so slight an obligation."

"I do not hate you," said the girl, wearily. "I cannot judge you because I don't in the least understand you."

"Nor I you," he returned, eagerly, and added with compunction at her pale looks: "Ah, *pobrecita!* I only distress you when you are not strong enough to bear it. I am so sorry for you. What! Is even that offensive? Then tell me only what you wish me to do. Can you not trust me so far?"

"As far as your treatment of me—myself—goes," said Alicia, a trifle grudgingly, "I do trust you. I know you have been kind to me, but I cannot forget what you said at the ball, nor all the things I hear

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of you, nor the man I saw you shoot like a dog.
Why did you kill him?"

"What do you mean? The man who shot at my brother and his children?"

"They told me you had hired him to shoot, so that you would all seem braver and be more popular, and that when you saw this was suspected you killed him."

"Ah," said Calderon, with some temper, and then more calmly: "You have been well prepared to hate me, and yet—I am of a different race, but I am not on that account a monster. Why do you not judge of me as you see me? Can you not grant me some virtues? Be at least just to me. A day, two days, ten days, and I shall see you no more——"

"You must go now," she interrupted, but with some gentleness.

"I know, I know. I should have been with my troops an hour ago. I am going." He paused. "If you trust me, why not behave as if you did? Why must we act these lies? You are lonely—I know you are—how lonely, my poor child! If you are glad to

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see me—and you *are* glad—why must we pretend that you are not? Why need I pretend that a beautiful woman thrown in my path like this leaves me unmoved? I will do exactly as you say; I will not come back if you say not, but I will not pretend that I do not want to come; no, nor believe that you would not sometimes be glad to see me."

Ever since she was seventeen, men had been making love to Alicia, and though she had loved none of them, she had derived varying degrees of amusement or excitement from their emotion. But this was something different. Of Calderon's emotion she knew nothing, or scarcely anything, so shaken was she by her own. She dared not look up, for fear of meeting his eyes. An agonized silence ensued.

He laid his hand on the door. "May I come back?" he said.

A barely audible "Yes" reached him.

"It will not be disagreeable to you?"

She summoned all her firmness. She desired above all things to bring the conversation out of this dangerous, delightful country of fogs and concealments, and to this end said with perfect honesty:

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“I shall be glad to see you.”

“Ah,” he said, “you are the bravest woman in the world, and you shall never regret it.” And with this he left her.

CHAPTER VII

LEFT her alone, but not lonely.

The first time a woman is really touched and stirred, the rest of time seems scarcely long enough to think it out in. Alicia was not at all aware that she was in any danger of falling in love with Calderon. She thought the confusion that reigned in her being was to be explained by the sudden reversal of her opinion of him. She thought her strange pleasure was due to being able to think so much better of a human being; to the sudden lifting of the sinister impression which had weighed so heavily upon her. Indeed, to be quite accurate, she did not think at all, but if she had been urged would thus have explained the tense exhilaration of her spirits.

She did not think, and did not want to think. Every now and again a vague and helpless wonder assailed her as to how she was to receive him when he returned. Often before, she had wondered how it

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would be wise or kind or right to receive a man—Richard or his peers—but as a matter of fact she had always known all the time how she actually meant to behave when the moment came. But this was different; then she had trusted to the caprice of the moment; now she really wanted to do the right thing, but was hampered first by not knowing what it was, and second by not feeling at all sure she would achieve it, if she did know.

She had scarcely finished dressing when the old woman came in with her arms full of flowers—flowers such as Alicia had rarely seen. Not that their varieties were unknown, they were but roses and gardenias, but in such profusion and perfection as she had never imagined. How different from set bunches of violets, or from cabbage-like American Beauty roses, with their stalks sticking through a cardboard box. How often at home she had received such tributes without a tremor.

Now she experienced several tremors. It seemed a most fitting and excellent epilogue to their interview, an emphasis of all that had happened. And then she was alarmed to find how much there was to empha-

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size, how much importance she already attached to it. With the flowers there was a note.

"After all, there are some advantages in being chief of an army. Do you remember the little garden on the hill? One of my aides is even now subsidizing the gardener or owner thereof and superintending the cutting of the best flowers. Presently he will have my orders to take them—to old Julia, of course. I am sitting under an orange-tree, trusting that it is not as hot where you are. I am writing on my knee, in the hope that I present the appearance of a general busy with his despatches. Alas, alas, señorita, there is great activity in the military world! A settlement is at hand, at which I am supposed to rejoice, having been instrumental in bringing it about. In two days, or three at most, you will be at liberty. Do you know that, after all, this morning, I went away without asking how you were? Would it be a great deal to pray you to send me a word in answer by the messenger who brings this? I should like to know that you are no longer suffering. M. C."

Under the charm as she was, all the more under since his note, two days, it seemed to her, was too much to spend under his roof. Her position was intolerable. She wrote:

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"Two days is too much. I cannot bear it. Thank you for the flowers. They are wonderful. I love them, but I want a greater favor. Set me at liberty to-night. Accomplish it, you, who are commander-in-chief of an army. I am quite well again.

"A. L."

To this, within an hour, she had a reply:

"You shall be free to-night, though remember that left to myself I should have been for peaceful methods."

She stood turning the note over in hands that actually shook. She was to be free, but how? And what methods, not peaceful, were to be used?

Suddenly the sound of heavy firing came as if in answer to her question.

And now began such an afternoon for her as might have atoned for the sins of a lifetime. It now needed no further explanation to understand in full the meaning of Calderon's letter. The time the insurgents had counted on being able to hold out was still two days short of completion. For this Calderon had been willing to wait, had it not been for her own impatience. He had been eager for a peaceful

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surrender, in spite of his consciousness of power. It was she, who, in spite of her talk of mercy, had driven him to use force.

She felt as if she directed every gun, and as if each shot were fatal. The afternoon wore on and she became possessed with one single desire—that Calderon should return and tell her what had happened, tell her that she was not a murderer.

"He said he would come," she said aloud, and knew that while that firing continued his thoughts were not of her.

Again it occurred to her that he might very well never return at all. She had granted him even in her most inimical moments the virtue of courage. He would not spare himself now. What more natural than that he should be killed?

About seven she heard the lock turn, and sprang up, for the guns had ceased a few moments before, to encounter—Julia with her dinner.

When she was alone she pushed the tray from her, and leaning her elbows on the table, covered her face with her hands. She was not crying, but was struggling to regain her spirit and poise. She did

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not notice that the door had not shut after Julia until it had admitted another. He was standing at her side before she suspected his presence, and when she saw him, the start his proximity caused her was too much for her nerves. She burst into tears.

He took her hand, but she snatched it away.

“Oh,” she said, crossly, “how I hate to be startled! As if I did not have enough to bear!”

“And that is all you have to say to me?” he said.

If she had been so weak as to look forward to their meeting as important, she did not like this intimation that he expected her to. She recovered her composure and was able to say:

“It is you, I think, who must have something to say to me.”

He did not answer. Looking up, she saw he looked worn and tired, and not a little dusty and dishevelled. He unbuckled his sword with a certain lack of energy, and then, there being no other place to sit, sat down on the floor with his shoulders against the wall.

“Your dinner will be cold,” he said, glancing at the tray.

“I cannot eat,” returned Alicia.

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"I beg you will eat," he said, politely, yet with a suggestion in his tone that to be forced to contend over such minor points was inexpressibly wearisome to him. "It may be some time before you eat again. Perhaps, too, you will give me a little. I have had nothing since sunrise."

It needed only this little excuse to pity in order to disarm Alicia completely. She poured out a cup of soup.

"That is very wrong of you—not to eat. I thought soldiers had to learn to take care of themselves," she said, reprovingly. "You look tired to death."

He drank the soup in silence, meekly accepting both the reproof and the little slices of bread which she handed down to him.

At length, his eyes meeting hers, he said:

"Well, it is all over. You will be free to-night."

"That is very good news," said the girl, but without enthusiasm. She knew her tone was cool, but how, she said to herself, could she be elated at her freedom when she did not know what price had been paid for it?

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He glanced at her sharply.

"I am more than repaid by your gratitude," he remarked, disagreeably.

"Is it entirely your doing?" asked Alicia, nettled at his tone, and intending to recall to his mind the work of the rest of the army.

"No," he said, "it is all yours. I was going to starve them out. It would have been a matter of a few days at most. My brother has been in favor of harsher methods all along, and when I found you agreed with him— It was just as well, I dare say. Very little powder and shot were expended."

"What! no one was killed?"

"The losses on both sides were slight."

"Ah," said Alicia. "You knew I did not wish men to be killed for my sake."

"No?"

In an instant she regained all her old impression of him. He was cool and unscrupulous, and his tone bit like steel. He went on :

"You wanted to be free to-night, and you knew I thought that there was but one way."

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"I wanted nothing that would cost human life," she said, decisively.

"No? Liberty has always cost that at least. But if you want also the pleasure of a free conscience, pray set the deaths to my account, for with me they do not weigh so heavily." He leaned his head back against the wall, and looked at her from under his raised eyebrows, as Vargas had first described him. She did not wonder that there were men who hated him.

"What has happened to Don Luis?" she asked.

"Nothing, as yet. He is in the military prison, with the others."

"What will happen to them?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

She leaned toward him, trying to make him look at her again.

"Don Mariano," she said, "you will not let them kill Don Luis?"

"I do not think I shall again interfere with the existing order in the hope of satisfying your wishes. There is not, as you Yankees say, enough in it."

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"It is the first time," said Alicia, "that you have been insolent to me."

"I deserve the more credit, then, for it is not the first time that you have been unjust and ungrateful."

"What do you mean?"

"You wished very much to be free to-night. It was not your fault that you wished it so much, but mine—the fault of things as they are. Nevertheless, if you were right to wish it, you might have had the courage to stick by your wish, even if it did cost the lives of a few soldiers and traitors." He got up and stood an instant as if in thought. "*Voy a pensar,*" he said. "How soon can we get off? Be ready at about ten, if you will be so kind, and I will come for you."

"You will take me to Rosa?"

He looked at her blankly. "Why, no, of course not," he said. "I shall take you to the coast. A steamer sails at sunrise."

"A steamer that will take me home? Oh, but it is a long trip to the coast; why wait until ten? I can be ready now, this instant."

"We must wait until after dark and the streets

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are deserted. I have, besides, several things to do. I must see my brother, and go to the hospital, and—as near ten as possible. I will send you a pair of saddle-bags. They must hold what you want for the journey. Later I can send your trunk after you. It would be well, would it not, to cable your relations? I will send one at once, if you will write it. My handwriting must not be on it, of course.” She sat down obediently, and paused, pencil in hand. Seeing this, he dictated: “‘Arrive Santa Maria’ (the name of your steamer), ‘the 20th.’ Do not sign it.” He took the paper and folded it carefully. Seeing that he was about to leave her, she said, quickly:

“You cannot go without telling me what has happened?”

At once it was evident that she was to get no spirited recital. He looked bored to death at having to delay for such a reason, and prepared to put her in possession of facts as quickly and as meagrely as possible.

“Their hope, since you and all their messengers failed, has been that their allies on the outside would

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act without any preconcerted signal, but thanks to your letter we have been able to identify a number of these allies and to secure enough evidence to imprison them, or, failing this, have kept them under such strict surveillance that any action was impossible. The whole thing has been extraordinarily badly managed. They could scarcely have succeeded under such bunglers. It has only remained for me to say whether I would starve them out or attack them. I thought the former plan best though tedious, for it would have saved a great deal of ill-feeling. Nothing is so harmless as an unsuccessful revolution in which no blood has been shed. But when I received your note I changed my mind. I ordered the only gun we had in place, and two hours later I was in the barracks myself. Whatever men were killed were killed at the door. It was a foregone conclusion. They could not keep us out. It was almost sure death for the first five or six men who tried to go in, but the others were all safe enough." He ended in a drawl of weariness.

"You were not among the first five, I am delighted to see," said Alicia, yielding to an irresistible

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impulse to be disagreeable, and the next moment regretting it, for she knew that he *had* been among those first few and that he would not take the trouble to say so.

"You will be interested to know," he went on, as if she had not spoken, "that your partisans attempted to blow up the barracks, not while they were in it—nothing so rash, but when, having surrendered at our discretion, they should have been safely removed to the prison. It would simplify matters, they thought, if we were all blown up in the building. Happily the danger occurred to me, and their arrangements were discovered before the fuse burnt out. You may imagine, however, how much clemency is likely to be shown to them. Is there anything else you wish to know? Ah, yes, another point. The American consul is now sitting in the prison waiting for an interview with Vargas in order to find out where you are. At twelve to-night it will be accorded to him. By that time, if by any chance he should succeed in finding out anything at all, you will be on the water. To-morrow he will receive a cable saying that you landed safely

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in New York to-day. No, I know you won't land for another week. But as far as Santiago is concerned your time since your escape from the barracks will be accounted for."

"One thing more. Rosa knows that her husband is alive?"

"I sent her a note at once."

"Ah, that was kind of you."

"I am fortunate in your approval," he said, and left her.

CHAPTER VIII

IT was after eleven when he knocked at her door. She had long been ready, and came out with the packed saddle-bags in her hand.

He was for the first time in their acquaintance in plain clothes, just as if, she thought, he were like any other good-looking gentleman of the type she had always known. She had no idea that to appear thus was an offence in the army which he commanded and that he did so only in order to avoid recognition in case they should meet anyone upon the journey.

He took the saddle-bags from her, crossed the court, looked out to assure himself that no one was in sight, and then motioned to her to follow him. Not a word had been exchanged between them.

It was a clear, cool evening, the moon had not yet risen, but southern stars are capable of giving

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a great deal of light. The town was absolutely quiet.

They walked silently down the same street up which a few days before they had come together, but once outside the town they took another turning and after a little came to a tree where two horses already saddled were tied. Calderon put her up in silence, flung himself on, and proceeded.

They had been going for some minutes before the fact struck Alicia with full intensity that in all probability they would never see each other again. It was with a different motive from the one he attributed to her that she asked:

“How long will it take us?”

He was slightly ahead of her, and drew back, as he answered:

“About three hours, I am afraid. We strike the coast at a nearer point than the railway does, but the roads are in a bad condition. We must make whatever time we can here. Later we shall not be able to go faster than a walk.”

Alicia wondered what worse she could expect. The road was evidently an old Spanish highway,

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so broad that a dozen carriages could have driven abreast upon it. It wound down among the hills like a dim river. It presented, as a matter of fact, something the appearance of a bed of a river, for originally it had been made of large square blocks, and these had been displaced by the torrential rains of many wet seasons, so that now in its whole wide extent there was but a narrow winding path in which horses could find safe footing.

Calderon rode on ahead, bent only on making time. In his hands this process became almost a science. His horse slowed only where it was necessary, and lost not an instant in getting into his stride again. His eyes never seemed to waver or deceive him as to the best bit of road; he never missed a piece of ground suitable for a canter. She watched his slim, strong figure in front of her, and wondered whether it was while at school in England that he had learned that firm, easy seat on a horse.

Now and again where the going would have allowed it she expected him to pull back beside her, but this he never did. Frequently he turned in his

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saddle to see that she was keeping up, but he did not draw rein. The pace was not fast, but very steady. She began to think that their last hours together were to be spent in unbroken silence.

They had been unceasingly descending from the highlands of the interior toward the sea, and presently the descent became steeper, the stones smaller and so numerous that there was now no choice of way. He was obliged to walk his horse, and the horses of themselves came abreast. He turned to her politely:

“You will be exhausted, I fear. It is a hard trip for a lady, but we have not much time. I must be back again before daylight.”

The air seemed so full of something dangerous and critical, it was to her so plain, like a palpable thing between them, that more was happening than his manner would admit, that she could scarcely command a suitable answer. She said, tonelessly:

“We were late in starting.”

“I was detained by my brother. I regretted keeping you waiting. He wished to talk to me. I did not think it prudent to show impatience to be off.”

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"He does not know that I— Of course not. But suppose he sends for you in your absence?"

"He will be told that I am asleep and not to be disturbed by anyone on any pretext. But he is not likely to send for me. We did not part cordially."

"Why not? After your success?"

"When I went to him I found poor Doña Rosa had been pleading her husband's cause, pleading for his life, and in the process she had unfortunately revealed what I had so far omitted to mention, and that is the scheme to blow up the barracks after surrender. This information did not predispose my brother to mercy. Indeed, after having spent three hours with him, I——"

"What will he do to them?"

"They are to have a legal trial."

"But what good will that do them?" cried Alicia. "They are traitors, of course. Everyone knows that."

"On the contrary, Vargas maintains that he was caught in the barracks against his will and points in proof of his innocence to the fact that he had brought his sister and his guest with him. He says

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very plausibly that he would not have brought two women if he had been concerned to strengthen the insurgent cause. All of which is very convincing if it were not for the letter which he gave you to deliver to his wife."

"Who knows of that letter?"

"So far, you and I, señorita."

"And no one else?"

"No one else."

"Destroy it."

"*Nombre de Dios,*" cried Calderon, "and why should I destroy evidence against an enemy? Why should I shelter a traitor—a man, moreover, whom I particularly dislike and despise?"

"He has been very kind to me," said Alicia, irrelevantly. "I have stayed in his house."

"You have stayed in mine. Am I not to be at all considered?"

"It is not a question of your life. If your life were in danger I should try to save it."

Calderon laughed.

"You would be very kind, señorita, but if my life were in danger from Vargas you would not have

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time to save me; I should be dead before you had time to draw breath."

Their horses were close together, and Alicia turned to him with the manner of a person who is about to mention that which hitherto has been only tacitly acknowledged.

"Don Mariano," she said, "I know you do not like nor understand my countrywomen, that only to-day I offended you, not wholly unintentionally, that we are not at all friends, and yet nevertheless I feel—" She paused, not because her idea was uncertain but because she could not on the instant command words suitable to express her belief that in the end he would obey her wishes. She half hoped that he would come to her assistance, but he remained inquiringly silent, and she finally ended with: "I feel you would do something to oblige me."

"I am vain enough to think I have already done much."

"Well, then, it is not so inexcusable of me to ask you to do still more."

"You find I was so well rewarded the last time that I must be eager to try again?"

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“What reward did you expect?”

“I expected your gratitude—not a great deal to ask—a little kindness, a slight change from your past brusqueness. I did what I had not merely imagined would please you, but what you had directly asked, or shall I say required of me. What was the result? My obedience to your wishes was but a new crime, a fresh opportunity for you to expose my wickedness. No, señorita, believe me, not again.”

“This time,” said Alicia, tremulously, “I would not be ungrateful. I should have no way of showing it, for I suppose I shall never see you again, but I should always remember as long as I lived.”

“And why, señorita, should I want to be remembered?” Calderon asked, with some irritation. “While there was time, I wanted a definite thing, that you should be a trifle more courteous to me, but now— Am I a school-girl to take pleasure in being remembered? You ask me to save Don Luis, to risk my reputation, possibly my life, for the sake of a man I heartily hate, and the reward is to be—that you will remember me? *Muchíssimas gracias*, but we are some centuries beyond that sort

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of thing. Besides," he answered, glancing down at her with one of his queer, quick looks, "the reward is mine already. You will not under any circumstances forget me."

"But do you not care at all in what manner I remember you?"

He held up his hand.

"Yes," he said. "I would give my right hand to know how you will be thinking of me. But, then, that is a thing you cannot tell me, and cannot control. A month, a year among your old surroundings may do stranger things to your recollection of me than you suppose, may very easily, whatever you say now, change me into a monster again."

"I could not under any circumstances think of you as a monster if you spared Don Luis."

"I have not said I minded your thinking of me as a monster."

She did not answer. Absurd as she felt it to be she was deeply hurt to find that at the final issue he would yield nothing, that, after all, she had no power over him. She felt as if he must know that she was more friendly in spirit than ever before.

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He ought to have seen that, lonely and nervous as she was, travelling in the dead of night by his side through a sleeping or unpeopled country, she was quite ready that a more pleasant relation should be forced upon her. Was she going to bicker, when they might as well have been the only couple alive in the whole world, so absolutely were they alone? This she said to herself was real hardness, as if his other offences had been inconsiderable in comparison. She was too inexperienced, not in being loved, but in loving, to understand in the least the fierce aloofness of his attitude. She believed it to be exactly what it appeared, utter indifference. With any other man she would have been wiser, would have suspected that, after all that had passed, he could not feel, as he rode beside her through the still southern night, as coolly antagonistic as his manner conveyed. As it was, she only felt solitary and unhappy, and reproachful.

They went on thus a long time. She could hardly have said for how long she had been listening in silence to the beat of the horses' hoofs on the stones, when he suddenly leaned forward and, laying his

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hand on her horse's neck, said in a voice too carefully controlled to be calm:

“Do you remember once offering me a bribe?”

She was not likely to forget the most humiliating episode of her life—so she reckoned the short scene outside the coffee-plantation. Now she grew hot, not so much at the recollection, but at the mere sound of words referring to it.

She said “Yes” defiantly, and raised her eyes to his to show that she was not afraid to look at him; then bitterly regretted that she had.

“Offer it to me again now.”

“The price of Don Luis's life?”

“Not a hair of his head shall be touched.”

She was distressed to find how her voice shook, as she answered:

“It seems to me that it is either right or wrong to save him. If it is wrong, you should not let yourself be bribed. If it is right, you should not need to be.”

“Right and wrong be hanged! Under the laws of any country he is a traitor, and deserves hanging. In saving his very worthless life I should un-

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dergo a certain amount of personal risk. It is merely a question of whether I choose to do this or not. I do not choose to do it unless I am offered something in return, unless, in a word, you will kiss me."

"Oh, how can I!" said Alicia, almost with a wail.

"Once you offered easily enough."

"It was different then."

"What, you hated me less?"

"I did not know you as well."

She was quite serious, but he laughed shortly at the ambiguousness of this statement and was silent. And if before their silence had been explicit and dangerous, it now had a significance that no words could outdo. So unmistakably were they both engaged upon the same subject that not a single outward sign or token was necessary.

He perhaps was under the misapprehension that she was in process of making up her mind. As a matter of fact, she had known at once that she was going to consent, yet every instant seemed to render it more impossible for her to break the silence and tell him so. This, strange to say, was where she found the almost insurmountable difficulty of the

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situation. Twice she opened her mouth to tell him, and twice found that she had closed it again without having spoken. As for him, he looked neither to the right nor the left, but having come to a tolerably good bit of road put his horse to a canter.

Presently they came out on the shoulder of a little hill, and looking down saw the sea almost at their feet. The night was still, and the sea was as calm as a great blue mirror. The waning moon, yellow and distorted, was pushing through a low bank of clouds. As far as the eye could see the beach ran a white stripe along the sea with its ragged fringe of palms behind it. The rest of their road lay through this same belt of palms and heavy vegetation. Here was their last view of open country. Alicia drew rein and gazed seaward. A little steamer was lying at anchor almost between her and the moon. The small bay was not a regular port. One long, wooden dock ran far into the water, and at this smaller boats were in the habit of taking on a cargo of fruit.

"That is your boat," said Calderon. "She has

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been loading all day, and as soon as it is light will weigh anchor."

Alicia had nothing to answer. She was taken up with a vision of herself waking the next morning out of sight of land. Then there would be a few days more and then New York and Aunt Fanny and Richard. How would she ever be able to believe that she had lived through such scenes as this; how explain to herself the strange, dreamlike emotion of the incident here ending? She sat very still with her head turned seaward, knowing that he was watching her. At last she said:

“What risk would you run?”

“The risk of angering the President.”

“Is that so dangerous for you?”

“Sufficiently, but there is a worse one before me.”

“What?”

“You imagine no risk for the man whom you have kissed?”

Her eyes made a question unnecessary, and he added:

“What else would ever seem worth doing?”

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"It is a risk you need not run. Save Don Luis without—without a bribe."

"I have named my price."

Again she knew the moment had come, and again found herself incapable of speech, until he leaned toward her, his hand on her saddle, and asked:

"Well, is he to live, or not?"

For answer she bent her head and kissed him. She had meant to brush his cheek, instead she met his lips.

A moment later he said, softly:

"See, señorita, how easy it is to save a man's life—or break his heart."

"I *have* saved his life?"

"Don Luis shall live—should have immortality if I could give it to him. And that is all you are interested in?"

"I must not be interested in anything else," said Alicia, and put her horse in motion. Calderon followed her, and they passed through the darkness of the belt of palms, then across a space of low, sandy hills covered with sea-grass and stunted bushes, and came to a stand-still on the white beach.

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Calderon lost no time. He lit a cigarette, holding the match an instant in the air before he extinguished it.

"The captain of the steamer knows nothing," he said. "He has received a special order from their agent to send a boat ashore here to-night for a passenger, an American lady alarmed by the revolution. To-morrow both the American consul and Doña Rosa will receive cables announcing your arrival in New York by last week's boat from here. You could have caught the boat by going directly to the port from the barracks. I do not think it will occur to them to inquire further whether or not you actually did go. The week since you escaped from the barracks will be practically wiped out."

"I shall of course tell my relations at home everything, and I cannot tell what they will do."

"You must do as you think best."

He got off and began unstrapping the saddle-bags from his horse. Alicia sat watching his quick, capable hands. When she looked seaward she saw that a boat had put out from the steamer. The moon had risen entirely out of the clouds now and shed

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a strange dead light on the dark gray-blue water. A little breeze was rising, and the surface of the sea was lined with fine ripples which broke gently hissing at the horses' feet.

Calderon laid the bags on the sand, and coming back, stood beside her. The boat was nearing shore rapidly. Her eyes were on it and his on her.

"Will you dismount?" he said. She slid to the ground without his assistance. He threw both bridles over his arm. "And now I must leave you," he said.

A true American, she held out her hand and said, simply:

"Good-by."

"*Hasta luego, señorita.*"

"You know I do not understand Spanish."

"What, you do not understand that?"

She shook her head.

"Why, think, señorita, of the thing I am most likely to say. Still you do not know? Well, then, beware of the day when you find out. Oh, yes, you will know some time." He kissed her hand, and before she was aware of his intention was absolutely gone.

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Not exactly thus had she imagined their parting. She had told herself that it was to be of course quite final, yet for that very reason she had expected it to be a little more explicit than this. She had not been conscious of expecting anything at all, but she now found herself acutely disappointed, at what she could not definitely have said. This was better, of course, more sensible, more prudent. Here was nothing which, when she came to her senses, she could ever regret; everything was over, and yet a word or two more would have done no harm. Without asking anything from her he might have let her see— Her eyes were still on the palms when the sound of a keel grating on the sand recalled her.

CHAPTER IX

SOMETIMES it seems as if Fate gave rest after periods of emotion, just as Nature gives sleep after pain.

For seven days Alicia lay on her berth in the deck-cabin of the little steamer, trying to struggle back to being the same person she had been before, fearing lest her new capacity for suffering and for happiness should attract the attention of those who had seen her set sail a short two months before.

By staying in her cabin she avoided all questions, though the rumor was going about that she had had experiences with the rebels. The old black stewardess and the only other lady passenger—an elderly person travelling for her health—were not skilful enough, during the visits they paid her, to elicit any further information. It was understood that she was not a good sailor and did not want to be disturbed.

She lay with her hands under her head, looking

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out of the little window, and saw the sun come up out of the wonderful blue water; saw now and then a palm-tufted island, or a blue cape loom up on the horizon, and best of all, saw nightly the same wan, misshapen moon which had lit her embarkation, rise later and later, until finally the morning before they reached New York the merest wisp of a crescent appeared but shortly before the sun. She looked at it gravely, and said, aloud:

“I shall never see its like again.”

All the ship was awake, for they had just sighted the lights of the New Jersey coast. Alicia, wrapped in a heavy cloak, for the May morning was dawning cool, looked upon her native land with mixed feelings.

If she had at once been plunged into her old life, among people doing the same old things, judging by the same old standards, who knows what changes might have been worked in the state of her heart and mind toward Calderon. As it was, these seven days had been but a poignant repetition of the week that preceded them. She had thought of him, felt and remembered nothing else. Alone and un-

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happy, she had allowed herself the full luxury of recollection. In these seven days, more perhaps than in the week of her imprisonment, lay for her the great danger.

On the dock were Aunt Fanny, and according to agreement, Richard. Alas, alas, what false hopes had she held out to him! Fall in love with the first of her countrymen whom she beheld on landing! Fall in love with kind, fat Richard!

“Well, dear,” said her aunt, enfolding her in an embrace, while Richard stood by, looking wistful, with his eyes as large as saucers. They were evidently determined to make her return pleasant. “How unexpectedly you came! We had scarcely got your letter saying that you were thinking of coming when we got your cable saying you were sailing at once.”

The scene in the little bare room when she had written the cable came back to Alicia, and she answered, vaguely:

“Yes, I thought it was well to take a steamer when I could get one. In those countries it is sometimes a little uncertain.”

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Surprisingly seldom is deceit carefully planned and concerted, a course of action determined on beforehand—especially with such people as Alicia. She was resolved to tell her aunt everything, and supposed at the moment that she was merely letting the first and not very propitious opportunity go by. After all, she could not very well enter into details before Richard. She naturally waited until she and her aunt should be alone.

Richard now spoke.

“Well, I am glad to see you safely home. There was something in the papers a day or so ago about a revolution down there——”

“A revolution!” cried Mrs. Evans. “I saw nothing about it. You must be mistaken, Richard. My husband and I always read the papers so carefully.” And a discussion arose between them about what the paper had said, and when, in which Alicia saw no necessity of joining. When it was over, however, she found herself still further committed to ignorance of any revolution having taken place, just because she had not already spoken of one.

Richard went on.

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"I don't suppose it amounted to anything at all. I remember I had a letter from you written about the same time." He directed a significant glance, and Alicia perceived the letter had met with his approval. "You did not mention any revolution. A man I know told me that the papers keep correspondents in those countries especially to send up stories of revolutions, and if they do not send up good lively stuff every now and then they get fired. Here is the inspector for your keys. What! you have no keys? What in thunder are those things?"

Calderon's saddle-bags were critically examined, while Alicia explained with whatever quickness she possessed that trunks were so apt to miscarry, to be put off at wrong stations and miss the steamer, that she had borrowed these saddle-bags in order to bring by hand whatever was absolutely necessary for the steamer, and that as her trunk *had* missed it, the Vargas would send it to her the following week.

She was surprised to find how easily this contented everyone, and they soon began to move toward the street, where her aunt's carriage was waiting for them.

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"You have not said anything about how you liked the dagos, Alicia," said Richard. "You came home sooner than you meant to. I told you you would. Come, be honest; it was not all as you expected, was it?"

"A good deal more, in some ways, Richard," Alicia began, but Aunt Fanny, who thought Richard's remark so obvious as to be better unsaid, remarked, kindly:

"Why, Richard, we must not taunt her with being anxious to get back to her home. There is the carriage, dear. No hand-luggage, either. You will find a number of pleasant invitations for you at the house. The Greys want you to spend Sunday, and the Morrises——"

"And my mother hopes that you will come to her in August at Newport," put in Richard.

"I think I have been away from home enough for this year, Richard. Thank Aunt Caroline and tell her I am going to stay quietly at Greenvalley with Aunt Fanny for the whole summer. Have you moved out of town yet, Aunt Fanny?"

"No, my dear, not until the last of the week—

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my old rule, the twenty-ninth of the month. That will give you time to repack and rest."

"Shall you be at home to-morrow?" asked Richard, as he helped her into the coupé.

"No, Thursday afternoon," she answered, thinking that this would permit only one interview before she went out of town.

She and her aunt drove uptown very pleasantly, the elder lady so determined to be agreeable that she was more concerned to recount the little happenings of Alicia's absence than to draw the girl out about her journey. Alicia followed her lead, and was content to ask rather than to tell.

It was not Aunt Fanny, however, who was most to be dreaded. Richard, with keener interest and more active mind, was infinitely more dangerous.

He came on Thursday afternoon and handed her an evening paper.

"I thought you would be interested to see this," he said, indicating a paragraph.

It was dated New Orleans, and read:

"Steamers arriving from Santiago bring word that the late revolutionary attempt in that country

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has ended in the complete victory of the Government party. One of the most encouraging features of the situation is the clemency with which the ringleaders have been treated."

Interested! The type fairly danced before her delighted eyes. He had kept his word. To this extent at least she had been in his thoughts.

She read the little paragraph three times, and then suddenly recalling the presence of Richard and finding that she had no idea how long she had been thus absorbed, said, hastily:

"Oh, yes, now I see where you mean," and promptly read it again. How fortunate, she thought, that Vargas was not mentioned by name. Then, indeed, questions would have come thick and fast.

"I suppose," said Richard, "that they call a revolution what we should call a street riot."

She remembered with disgust the time when her own attitude had been equally ignorant, and answered as lightly as she could:

"Something like that, I suppose. It is hard for a foreigner to know much about the political con-

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ditions. They have not much sympathy with our point of view and have great powers of concealment."

"Oh, well, I don't suppose you were very much interested in their politics, anyhow. What sort of people are they? Spanish, aren't they?"

"Of course they are. How can you be so ignorant? What else could they be but pure Spanish, some of the oldest and best families in Spain?"

Richard looked a trifle sulky at this tirade.

"Well, I did not know," he said. "Your letters were not a mine of information; you only wrote once, and though that was a nice letter, it did not tell me a whole lot of things I wanted to know. Did you ever see the President, and what was he like? What was his name?"

Sometimes it is difficult to pronounce a name as if it were merely a name, and not a term of endearment. Alicia said, with what she hoped was simplicity:

"Calderon."

They argued a moment over the pronunciation, Richard finding it difficult to throw the accent

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entirely on the last syllable with its full, heavy "o."

"Did he ask you to be Mrs. President, as we all warned you he would?" he presently asked, jocosely.

"No. Doubtless only because he has a wife and large family already. I may tell you in confidence, Richard, that I received not one offer of marriage during my entire trip."

"Would you like to receive one on returning home?"

"Unless, of course, you think I could count a young mining expert on the steamer going down who told me that no American should live in such a country without a good, capable American wife, and that he was very lonely. That was a hint, don't you think so?"

"I am not much of a believer in hints."

"Oh, Richard, if only you were!"

"I want to know plainly whether you have come back as you said you would, more inclined to say 'yes.' "

"I have come back with my mind quite clear about it. This must be final. I can never marry you."

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"Your aunt said——"

"Dear Richard, is it Aunt Fanny that you want to marry, because otherwise what have her utterances to do with the case?"

"I thought, of course, when you said you would think it over——"

"Oh, how can you! You begged and besought me to think it over, because, you said, it would be a comfort to you and would not commit me to anything. Now it seems you believed all the time it *was* committing me."

"I think you are fond of me in a way."

"In a sort of way."

"Perhaps you would grow fonder," he suggested, hopefully.

Along these lines the matter was argued out between them for the third time, leaving Alicia more irritated, and Richard no less determined than ever.

The next day they went out of town. Mr. and Mrs. Evans always spent the entire summer at their place on the Hudson, a large, well-kept, and incredibly hot old country-seat, which had been in the family for years and with which, consequently, no

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fault could be found. Alicia, whose nature was not over rural, had always made a practice of spending as much of the months of July and August away from this spot as she could conveniently arrange, the alternations between burning sunshine and hideous thunder-storms being very little to her taste.

But one of the characteristics of her present state of mind was a belief that only change of scene was needed to give her perfect calm of spirit. She now thought longingly of Greenvale, and believed with confidence that a whole summer among its lawns and greenhouses would be exactly the peace she desired.

She was not a little discouraged, therefore, to find that after she had been settled a week she was just as restless as ever.

Parties of her friends, male and female, were asked to come and enliven her, but, alas, for some reason, they did not enliven. She wished them away again, that her own trains of thought might be followed without interruption.

Her uncle and aunt secretly agreed that she was regretting Richard, who, without believing her last

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refusal final, was adopting a new policy and priding himself vastly on having the courage to try a little wholesome neglect.

To Alicia this was the greatest relief.

She almost found it in her heart to be grateful to him. He was the only person who seemed at all interested in discussing her trip with her, and this, since it interfered with her own private recollections, she was particularly glad to be spared.

Unfortunately this recollection, on which she had intended to exist for all time, now began to fail her. By much use it lost the first wild freshness and became in her mind an artificial thing, of no reality, withered by too much handling. It was now her recollection she recollected. She had lost the power of going back to the actual facts. Yet at the same time her need of the support which memory had so far given was all the more acute. Try as she would, however, she could not any longer realize that she had lived through such events. The instant she began to distrust her own accuracy in small details, matters of a look, an emotion, everything at once fell to the ground. Was

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she sure she had any right to remember? What had been said? The sentences themselves she could recall, but the look and tone that had made them so important she could no longer be sure of. Perhaps she had been quite wrong. Perhaps his feeling had been all a matter of her imagination.

She was surprised, and to a certain degree shocked, to find that at the end of a month she was farther away than ever from telling her aunt the story of her visit. Indeed it was now to all intents and purposes impossible to do so. The experienced know that to let slip repeatedly the chance to tell is in itself deception. Alicia was not wise and did not realize this until too late. She sat in silence while her uncle exclaimed:

“Well, well, I could have told you you would not want to stay three months. You thought you were going to have great adventures, and you would not have believed me if I had told you you were much more likely to find them at home than down there.”

Such remarks were another stone in the wall of silence, and after a little she abandoned all idea of confession.

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One incident varied the monotony of the month of July. She had subscribed to a New Orleans newspaper, finding that the press of that city kept in close touch with the South and Central American countries. One single item rewarded her:

General Real, formerly consul from Santiago in New York, sailed yesterday from this port to assume his new position as commander-in-chief of the army of Santiago.

What, she asked herself with a sinking heart, had become of the former commander? Had he fallen into some of the dangers from which he had rescued others, was he dead, or had he resigned in order to return to his racing-stable in France? From Rosa she had heard nothing since her departure, although she had written twice. The reason was not hard to guess. Rosa was probably bitterly ashamed of the treatment the girl had received at Don Luis's hands. Alicia had counted after Vargas's release upon getting a jubilant letter full of the praises of the man to whom he owed his life. Nothing of the kind arrived.

Now she wrote again, appealing for an answer,

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mentioning on another page the paragraph in the New Orleans paper.

She waited eagerly for the three weeks to pass before an answer could possibly reach her.

In the meantime, during the early part of August, she had a telegram from Mrs. Brooks at Newport, asking her to come on at once for a week. She was in the habit of spending two or three weeks with her dear Lily in the course of every summer. This lady was a widow, at whom the world marvelled, so circumspect was her conduct in the circle of her not over-prudent friends. Her tongue was allowed such latitude that there was scarcely anything that she would not say; but what was confusing was that her behavior was so unimpeachable that anything in the least unconventional she could never be induced to do. It was really a marvel of skill.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans were both attached to her and permitted themselves to be amused by remarks and anecdotes from her which would have put anyone else out of court.

Alicia, bringing her telegram for inspection, was

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asked if she would like to accept. Why, yes, she thought, on the whole, she would. Consent was readily given.

When she left the room her elders exchanged a smile.

"I am glad to see," Aunt Fanny remarked, "that if Richard won't come to her, she is not above going to him."

CHAPTER X

WHEN Alicia landed from the General—may the name of that historic steamboat never be changed—she at once detected among the carriages and carts and hacks and automobiles on the dock Mrs. Brooks's little basket-work trap, and in a surprisingly short time the two ladies were threading their way through the narrow streets of the town, while Mrs. Brooks began to bring her guest up to the point of development to which society had attained.

“I left a bridge party where I was winning to come to meet you, dear. Was not that affection? Not that anyone does meet their guests any more or pay the least attention to them. I asked a man the other day who had been spending two weeks with the Greys what sort of a cook they had, and he said he really could not tell. He had taken only two meals in the house, and those were both breakfasts. It was that nice little *attaché* from Brazil—or is it Peru?”

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"The diplomats are all here, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. I always like them so much; don't you? Even the Persian, or else he is an Armenian, but he is delightful. Have you heard, talking about foreigners, about the dreadful time poor Jane Harley is having? People laugh so, and yet it is almost a tragedy. She and her husband have not spoken for years, and now he is very ill—dying, I understand—in the Engadine, or some such place, and wants her to go out to him. She is afraid that if she does not go, he will leave every penny he can to his sister; but, on the other hand, she has a very attractive and abominably rich young man here, and she is afraid that if she turns her back for an instant someone else will snatch him from her, and several are willing to. You see, either way she endangers her future. And then, of course, there is always the risk that by going she might lose both, for her husband might die while she was on the water and her young man be faithless, and there she would be——"

"How can you, Lily?"

"It is funny; admit it is. Still people do talk horridly. The young man is very attractive, and all the

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women would like to take him away. And so rich! No one knows how he made it. Some say he held up stages over the Andes, when they were bringing gold from the mines, and some say that he was once president of somewhere or other, and bolted with the funds, but the 'dips' are civil to him, so I suppose he is all right. And, oh, my dear, he does not like American girls. Really, that is one reason why I telegraphed for you. Nancy Morris, you know what a dreadful little creature she is, and only eighteen. Her mother ought to keep her in order. Well, he was talking to her one day when she was in her bathing-dress—I myself don't talk with men under those circumstances—and he said something she did not like, and she pulled him into the water with all his clothes on. Afterward—wasn't it characteristic of Newport? —everyone said they must be engaged."

"Even an American would not have stood that, I should think."

"Well, he thought it was simply hideous. I told him that all American girls were not like that. He admitted there were exceptions, but hinted that he had not seen any since he arrived in Newport, and we

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got talking about it, and finally I mentioned you, and he grew so interested, and at last begged me to send for you—said he would like to meet your type of American girl. Not that Mrs. Harley will let him speak to you. She is very strict with him. I think he finds her a bore at times, only foreigners are so polite. Oh, by the way, you must look after your Cousin Richard. She is beginning to think him 'such a dear boy.' You must not permit that. There are some married women who are good for a young man, but Jane Harley is not one of them. Had I an infant son I should seek for him a period of subjugation to some older woman, but not our friend."

"Oh, Richard!" said Alicia, in a tone between relief at being rid of him and natural distaste to seeing herself supplanted.

Mrs. Brooks's house was on the water—a large, low, white wooden house, which had been built by her father. Smooth lawns, hydrangeas, geraniums, awnings—one almost got the impression of simplicity in contrast to the huge marble and granite piles which arose on each side of her.

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They drew up before the steps, and Mrs. Brooks descended and trailed up the stairs, talking.

“What is that, Beckam? Mrs. Grey telephoned to know whether I would dine and play bridge. Did you say that Miss Lea was with me? Oh, she wants her, too? No, we can't. Telephone and ask Mr. and Mrs. Grey to come here instead. Now we need another man. Beckam, telephone to Mr. Bidgely. Now, Alicia, hush. Don't contradict my orders. You can be as disagreeable to him as you like and let him know I would ask him against your wishes.”

She had reached the hall-table by this time and was turning over the cards and letters that had come during her absence.

“H'm! let me see. Will I lunch to-morrow—” She became absorbed for a moment, and then threw Alicia the pile of cards. “Look those over,” she said, “and let me know if anyone interesting has been here,” and then she returned to her note.

Alicia turned them over slowly and without much interest. They represented for the most part formal visits, Mr. and Mrs. This or That; here and there a girl's card, for Mrs. Brooks was a great favorite

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among younger women; then a diplomat's card all covered with titles; and then—and then—Alicia blinked her eyes, for the next card bore the name of Mariano Calderon!

Fortunately Mrs. Brooks was still deep in her correspondence, with an occasional "Oh!" or "What a hand the creature writes!" so that Alicia had a moment in which to recover herself.

Thrusting the card under Lily's nose, she presently asked in a voice tolerably unconstrained:

"Who is this man?"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Brooks, dropping her letter with an exclamation. "Has that entrancing person been here? Oh, why did I go to meet you, or why didn't you come by the early train, as you first said? Then I should have been at home. And who knows when he will get leave to come again?"

"Who is he?"

"Jane's Central American."

"Entirely hers?"

"My dear, I'd give my eye-teeth to know whether there is anything in it at all. Foreigners are so different and look well driving about in a victoria when

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our men look just—idle. What is it, Beckam? Oh, Mr. Bidgely is very much obliged, but he is dining with Mrs. Harley this evening. There, dear, you see it was high time you came to look after your property. Why don't you effect an exchange?—that would be so amusing—Richard for the Central American. I am afraid she would not consent, and he is not the kind who gets on as well with girls as with married women. I must not keep you standing here talking about people you have never seen. You must lie down and rest for an hour or so, and then we will dine at half past eight and dress for our party after dinner."

"Come with me while I take off my things," said Alicia, who had not quite exhausted the topic of these people she had never seen, and while the maid was busily unpacking, hurrying hither and thither about the room, she managed to bring up the subject again.

"Surely, Mr. Calderon is a new arrival. He was not here this winter?"

"He arrived about a month ago, or a little more. He has the most wonderful horses. That was the first

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thing. Then it seems he has lived a great deal in Paris, and all the men in the French embassy know him, and one or two of the Englishmen. Anyhow, for one reason or another, you know how these things happen, he became a craze. No party was given without him. Then he gave a wonderful party on his yacht—did I tell you he had a yacht?—music and supper, and only just the right people. Don't you ever read the 'Social Events' in the daily papers?"

Alicia, who had been searching other papers for the mention of this same name, was obliged to admit that she did not, and presently was left to rest—to rest, that is, as much as a young woman can rest who has just received the most exciting possible intelligence.

She lay down and closed her eyes. She told herself she did not know whether to be glad or sorry of what she had heard. The fact remained, however, that she was radiantly glad. Perhaps, she thought, it is not true that he is attentive to another woman, yet there was no reason for doubting it. Even supposing that her impression of his feeling for her had been correct at the time, was that likely to sustain a man

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through the head-turning process of a success among such women as Lily Brooks and Mrs. Harley? On the other hand, she had no real guarantee that he had not been married or engaged throughout her entire acquaintance with him.

Nevertheless, say what she would, this was undoubtedly—that in a few hours she would see him. At this her heart stood still, contemplating the possibility of his not approaching her at all. Not likely. And yet how could she flatter herself that she was an object of interest to him, since he had been six weeks in the country without so much as inquiring concerning her. Or could she delude herself into thinking that there had been design in his suggestion that Mrs. Brooks should send for her, and that his visit that afternoon had been partly for her?

At this point the industrious Beckam knocked on the door to say that Mrs. Harley had just telephoned to know if Miss Lea would dine with her that evening at eight-thirty, and that she would take her on to the Basils' ball.

Alas, how weak is woman! Alicia, without an instant's debate, answered: "Yes; at least ask Mrs.

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Brooks whether she has any objection. If not, say I shall be delighted to come."

No one would have fancied she had made a long journey during the day, when at half past eight she ran downstairs, her eyes shining, her wonderful white and silver dress emphasizing the blond radiance of her skin. Even Mrs. Brooks exclaimed:

"Oh, poor Richard! I see his downfall is at hand!"

Richard, when Alicia entered Mrs. Harley's drawing-room, was the only person to receive her. He arose with a manner elaborately casual, saying:

"How are you, Alicia? I thought you were the girl who was going to stay quietly at Greenvale all the summer. Sorry I could not dine with you at Mrs. Brooks's this evening." So far his diplomacy carried him, but now, melted by her loveliness, he added, more warmly: "Take pity on me here. Be nice to me this evening. I do not like our fellow-guest. We are only four."

"Who is the fourth?" Her tone was beautifully indifferent.

"A Central American chap, a fellow called Cal-

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deron. Everybody is making a huge fuss over him, as if he were not supercilious enough already. I must say he rubs me up the wrong way. I think American men ought to be good enough for American women. He takes particular pains to be insolent to me, as if he had taken an instinctive dislike to me. Well, if he has, I return it."

"But what more natural, Richard? Is there not rivalry between you? Doubtless he fears that our fair hostess may prefer her own countryman." She stopped, remembering that she had no idea whether or not her suggestion was not the bitter truth.

In the pause their hostess entered. She was a beauty, and, above all things, a woman of fashion, perhaps the only woman in her little circle whose unaided friendship could by itself bestow social position. She was a woman all sweetness and languor, too sweet to breathe malice, too languid to raise her eyelids.

"So glad you came, dear," she murmured, almost inaudibly. "We have been off all the afternoon on Mr. Calderon's yacht. That is why I am late. Richard was in a dreadful state when he found Mrs.

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Brooks had asked him to dinner—wanted me to let him off, but I would not. Oh, was he pretending that he did not care? Well, he did. He made such a fuss, that finally it was Mr. Calderon's brilliant idea that I should ask you here to pacify him. It is so nice to see you again."

"It is not very difficult to see through Calderon's charity," said Richard, in a growl, and added, gallantly, to Alicia, "Well, I am only too glad to be kept out of the way by having to entertain Miss Lea." And foolish as it was, Alicia felt her heart sink at this confident explanation of Calderon's motive in wanting a fourth person at dinner.

A moment later the curtains opened, the man announced "Mr. Calderon," and he entered. Alicia took in his appearance in one swift, agonized glance, his immaculate evening dress and calm bearing. Surely no countenance was ever farther from expressing emotion. He greeted his hostess and Richard. Then he was introduced to Alicia. She felt herself receiving him with an embarrassment which she hoped was visible to no one but himself. He dealt with the situation with courage.

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“Ah,” he said, “I have already had the pleasure of meeting Miss Lea. I think you were at a ball in Santiago, my native country, last winter.”

Fortunately Alicia’s reply was lost in Mrs. Harley’s exclamations of surprise. She had quite forgotten that Alicia had been in Central America in the preceding winter, and was Santiago Mr. Calderon’s country? How stupid of her. She always thought it was Guatemala. And they had met before and danced together? What a coincidence!

No, Calderon put in, he had not had the honor of dancing with Miss Lea. This was an excellent point. It sounded as if their acquaintance had been an introduction in a ballroom, and nothing more. Richard, who had pricked up his ears at the mention of a previous meeting, lost interest.

Alicia now rallied her spirit and said:

“I think that when I last met you you held an important command in the army of Santiago, did you not?”

“Yes, I was commander-in-chief at the time.”

She looked at him inquiringly, but he replied by a look conventionally grateful for her excellent

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memory, and she had not the courage to ask him point-blank why he was so no longer.

Dinner was now announced, and Mrs. Harley slid her hand within Calderon's arm, telling Richard to take his cousin. Each couple commented on the other as they moved toward the dining-room.

Mrs. Harley said, with a gesture toward those in front of her:

“An engagement, of course. Do you approve of cousins marrying?”

Richard murmured:

“No wonder you did not care for Central America, if that is a specimen of its inhabitants.”

At table the same division of the party continued. Mrs. Harley, her elbows upon the table, her head turned frankly toward Calderon so that the other two were completely ignored, said, with her usual sweet languor:

“I should so much like to see your wonderful country. Roses as big as soup-plates, I suppose, and palms and snakes and alligators. Why would it not be better than Aiken or Palm Beach for the winter? If I make up a party and come down there next Feb-

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ruary, will you put us up, Mr. Calderon? I think you would be a charming host."

At this his eyes met Alicia's, or rather their eyes flashed across each other, and he said, addressing the girl directly :

"Will you be of the party, Miss Lea?" It sounded like the merest formality, but her smile was surprisingly vivid as she answered :

"You southern hosts are almost too hospitable. You actually detain your guests against their will."

"How delightful, after our manners," said Mrs. Harley, still addressing Calderon, and without the slightest notion that she had not perceived the drift of the conversation. "Here one is asked for a week and at the end of that time turned out."

"A week is a long time," said Alicia.

"Not in my experience," said Calderon, without a too conspicuous expression.

"You know I am perfectly serious about wanting to come down," Mrs. Harley continued. "I am sure I should enjoy it immensely; should I not, Mr. Calderon?"

"Ask Miss Lea."

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At this she perforce turned to the girl, but Richard interrupted:

“There is no use in asking her anything about Central America. I have never been able to get anything out of her about the country. I am sure she could describe things, but she won’t. Not even while she was there——”

“You did not want guide-book letters, did you, Richard?”

“I wanted *some*,” returned Richard, with emphasis. “Oh, yes, you wrote to me once, a very nice letter, the only nice letter I ever had from you.”

Irresistibly Alicia’s eyes sought Calderon’s, but he was looking at Richard with polite attention, and now remarked with a courtesy that seemed merely conventional:

“I should have said Miss Lea’s letters would always be charming.”

“You would not if you had ever had any from her,” replied Richard, grumpily.

“It is a great bore to write letters except to people one is fond of,” observed Mrs. Harley, with some secondary meaning on her own account.

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"A great deal of trouble is caused in this world by letters," said Alicia.

"And a great deal of happiness, señorita," returned Calderon, and Alicia colored to the eyes at this familiar title. Mrs. Harley went off into raptures over the Spanish language, but Richard had seen the blush and vaguely hated Calderon.

"Oh, say something more in Spanish," she cried. "What a language! What vowels! What would not sound charming in it! How does one say, for instance——"

"There is one phase I have often wondered about," said Alicia, amazed at her own courage, but determined to know. "What does *hasta luego* mean?"

"Oh, I know that," said their hostess. "It means just *au revoir*, doesn't it?"

Calderon looked fully at Alicia.

"It means," he said, "until I see you again,' but it might mean a great deal more than that. I can imagine circumstances in which it might mean that 'nothing but death shall keep me from you.'"

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"A very convenient phrase," said Richard, crossly.

"Oh, what a language to make love in!" exclaimed Mrs. Harley.

"Is not any language a wonderful one to make love in—when you are in love?" said Calderon, and Alicia, glancing up, saw how completely Mrs. Harley had taken this remark to herself. A chill came over her. How undignified I am, she thought, to allow myself to be thrilled by these hints and suggestions. Perhaps throughout they have had as much meaning for her as for me. She turned to Richard and took up reproachfully his comments upon her powers as a correspondent.

Nevertheless, she heard a good deal of what was going on between the other two. She heard Mrs. Harley with astonishing pertinacity return to the subject of her next winter's trip. She heard her met with a politeness which did not in the least further the scheme. Then she heard a quick dialogue.

"I think you might be more enthusiastic."

"My dear lady, I should be unspeakably en-

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thusiastic if I could by any possibility be in Santiago myself next winter."

"You can if you wish to, I suppose."

"It is impossible."

"And pray why not?"

"I am *persona non grata* to the President."

"Your own brother! How absurd! What makes you think so?"

"A trifle. He has officially exiled me."

After this it was scarcely to be expected that Alicia should continue her already languishing conversation with Richard.

Exiled, and for her! His very reticence proved it. Was this the risk he had told her he would run in saving Vargas? And if so, had her kiss in the least repaid him for the actual catastrophe? Impossible. She could not so far flatter herself. Then how must he hate her! For an instant Vargas's life seemed to her a trifle compared to such a sacrifice. How could he forgive her for having brought this upon him? Did not every man love his country, even though he might choose to wander from it? Had not his sol-

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diers, the whole machinery of the army, been very dear to him? It was a dreadful thing, and yet—and yet how strange a bond between them! She looked at him as he sat so calmly conversing with another woman. He was nevertheless a man who for her sake had been driven from his native land.

Richard stopped short in a sentence, with real temper.

“You are not listening to a word I say,” he said, angrily. “I believe you are going to be just like all the other women about this fellow, but you might have the dignity to wait until he is at least talking to you before——”

She recovered herself with an effort.

“Don’t be so fierce, Richard. Naturally I am interested to hear of Santiago. I want to ask Don Mariano about——”

“Who?” roared Richard.

“Mr. Calderon.”

“What did you call him?”

“I called him Don Mariano. He was always so spoken of down there.”

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“I thought you did not know him down there.”

“I heard him a great deal talked of. He was commander of the army.” And then, lest Richard should pursue his inquiries farther, she said, boldly, as a pause came between the two others:

“You have given me no news of my friends, the Vargas, Mr. Calderon.”

“I can give you the best. I saw them shortly before I left the country, and they were well and happy.”

“I heard—I was afraid,” Alicia hesitated, “that Don Luis was not on the most cordial terms with the President.”

“You were misinformed. He is now in the cabinet.”

“In the cabinet!”

“The President’s right-hand man.”

“But I thought——”

“Don Luis’s political opinions have undergone a reformation.”

“He must owe much, everything, to you,” said Alicia, with more emotion than prudence. “They should be deeply grateful.”

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“There is no occasion for gratitude. For whatever little I was able to do for them I have been most amply, most generously, rewarded.”

“Oh, if you feel compensated——”

“If it were to be done again, I should ask nothing better than to go through the same experience.”

Here Mrs. Harley, not too well pleased that his attention could be so easily and completely distracted from herself, arose from the table, somewhat cutting short her enjoyment of a peach.

CHAPTER XI

IN the drawing-room Mrs. Harley settled herself on a sofa, showing a good deal of shapely, silk-clad leg, and remarked while she sipped her coffee:

“I must not leave those two smoking too long. They dislike each other so much! It is quite exciting to have them at the house at the same time. Mr. Calderon thinks Richard desperately aggressive, and Richard—my dear, when you are Mrs. Bidgely I hope you will teach him to be a little broader-minded.”

“That would be quite an undertaking,” returned Alicia. She knew Mrs. Harley was just as well aware as she was that she was not going to marry her cousin. This lady continued:

“What did you think of the other, Mr. Calderon? Oh, I forgot, you said you had met him before. I suppose he is a great person in his own country.”

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"Yes, he seemed to be. He is a brother of the President."

"And lived like a prince, I imagine. He entertains most charmingly here. Did you ever go to his house there?"

"He gave no entertainments while I was there—at least none that I heard of."

"My dear little girl, what a wasted opportunity! Fancy being in the country of that charming man and not making up to him! I am afraid you will hardly make up for lost time, no matter how hard you try. The other evening, on his yacht, I assure you not one of the women in the party would go ashore on the first trip of the launch; they wanted to wait for the last trip so as to go with him. Poor man, he makes it so evident that he is not very much attracted by the American girl, but they are not discouraged! You see," a smile accompanied this observation, "he is obliged to take refuge with old married women like myself. Even dear Lily Brooks, with her affectation of a motherly manner—oh, I forgot you were staying there. That reminds me, I am so glad you were not too civil to him at din-

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ner, for I fancy Lily—you know how fond I am of her, but she has not very much tact—sent for you as a sort of sample of what an American girl should be, a sort of 'sent on approval' idea. He hinted something of the kind. A little too Turkish a notion for my taste."

"Well, let us hope he approved," said Alicia, who found her spirits proof against even Mrs. Harley's assaults. She was convinced that her hostess would never have taken so much trouble to be disagreeable if she were not herself perturbed in mind. And as if in proof of this, she next remarked with concentrated sweetness of manner:

"If I were you, dear, I should not antagonize that good Richard for the sake of such a will-o'-the-wisp."

"Is Mr. Calderon a will-o'-the-wisp?" asked Alicia, civilly.

"I meant his approval."

The girl was, however, more influenced than she appeared by this conversation, for presently, when the men came out of the dining-room, she allowed Richard to manœuvre her into a corner,

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and sat talking to him until it was time to go to the ball.

They drove almost in silence. No one relation between any two of the four people in the carriage was entirely devoid of strain of one kind or another. The distance was short; they soon turned in between the tall granite columns and iron-wrought gates of the entrance. The grounds were lit by Japanese lanterns, a stream of carriages and automobiles was already wending its way out.

The ballroom itself was not large, as ballrooms are counted in New York, but beyond it was a huge enclosed piazza, where dancing, under circumstances not quite so favorable, was also in progress. Beyond this again was a narrow winding conservatory, where couples could conceal themselves from their legitimate partners for the next dance. There was to be no cotillon, and the little old-fashioned white and gold cards and pencils had been handed to each of the guests at the ballroom door.

Alicia had scarcely put her foot on the parquet, while Richard claimed the first, fifth, eighth, and so on, when Calderon's figure suddenly appeared, with-

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out any effect of pushing, without rudeness or apparent effort, directly between them, and somehow it was his name, and not Richard's, which was written down for the fifth and sixth. This accomplished, he disappeared, and she did not see him for some time, until a casual trip about the piazza revealed him in close conversation with Lily Brooks.

Alicia regretted he was not in the ballroom. She would not have been sorry that he should see that in a small way she was almost as important a person in her country as he in his. This was a different occasion from the ball in Santiago. There she had had to make some effort to attain the popularity she deserved; here she did not lift her finger.

There is with some women a strange and easy charm which they are best able to exert on all men when wholly absorbed in one. Of this power Alicia now found herself possessed. When toward the middle of the evening Calderon came for his dances, Richard was by no means the only man in the room who watched her departure with solemn eyes.

They danced in silence. She was prepared to find him a worthy partner. Yet, though she loved

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dancing, nothing seemed more natural than that, after a single circuit of the room, he led her away to the conservatory, to a corner which she could not but suspect he had been at some pains to select earlier in the evening. It was in an angle of the building where they could look out across the level lawn to the sea—a sea chill and colorless even in summer, compared to the waters they had known. Outside there was the whispering of waves among the rocks, and inside the low murmur of many conversations.

“Don Mariano,” said Alicia at once, “I am so sorry that you are an exile.”

“I ran the risk, señorita, for a great price.”

“I fear that for this nothing could repay you.”

“You are quite mistaken. I am already amply repaid for everything, and—I still hope for more.”

“You know, of course, that when I—when I asked you to save Don Luis I had no idea, I did not imagine—indeed, I do not understand now what can have happened.”

“Why, not very much has happened, señorita. You know that in Santiago the President has the right of forbidding the country to anyone he se-

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lects. He exercised this right in my case. We disagreed on the subject of Vargas. There was no direct evidence against the man. My brother thought, and I dare say he was right, that he ought to be got out of the way, evidence or not. Clemency and justice are words which a man in my brother's position must not too much regard. I have often been in accord with him on such matters. This time I insisted that Vargas should have a perfectly legal trial. On account of my position I was able to insist on this, in spite of the President's opposition. The natural conclusion which he drew from this unusual *punctilio* on my part was that I was personally interested in the safety of Vargas; in other words, that I was involved with the revolutionary party. He spent some time and trouble trying to get evidence against me. As the police system is under my jurisdiction, I was very soon aware of his movements, and one day I could not resist the temptation of sending in all the reports obtained on my account signed with my own name. He really behaved admirably, for he is a quick-tempered man, but the next day I received a communication that in future

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my presence in the country would not be required. He paid me the compliment of believing me the most dangerous element against him, and having rid himself of me decided to make Vargas his own man. This was easier than I had supposed it would be. I do not know how it was accomplished, but Don Luis is an important man in the Government."

"Oh," said Alicia, with real self-reproach, "I did not know what I was asking of you."

"Did you know what you were giving?"

"Yes," she said, "or at least I know now; I gave you trouble and danger, and at last homelessness."

"Yes, all these. Once I should have regretted them, but now I care only for one sort of exile—if you should send me from you."

Alicia was silent through sheer inability to control her voice sufficiently to reply, but perhaps her air had the appearance of coldness, for he went on:

"Ah, señorita, I have been throughout at a disadvantage. I have not behaved as one of your own countrymen would have behaved. I have had scruples where they would have had none, and I have lacked them where they would most have hesitated."

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They would never have imprisoned you at all, I suppose, but neither would they have had the courage to let you go without a word, as I did. But you understood? You knew why I let you go almost in silence, in order to come and find you in your own country among your own people?"

"No," said Alicia, "I did not understand—I never understood you."

"And yet it was so simple, so simple, from the moment you slipped down from your pile of tables and chairs into my arms. Was I a stick or stone, that I could harbor you, young and spirited, within my very walls and not love you? But was I a villain to force my love on you while I held you a prisoner? I thought you understood, otherwise—what have these months among different standards done? Do you think of me as a monster? As a man unscrupulous and cruel?"

"What makes you think," said Alicia, with a faint return of her old gayety, "that I have been thinking of you at all?"

"Ah," he answered, "you have thought of me oftener than of many men, oftener than of, shall

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we say, Richard. But how? Am I a horror to you, a man in whose power you would fear to be?"

"Circumstances are not likely to put me a second time in your power, are they?"

"It is a power to which you might safely confide yourself for the rest of your life. Ah, señorita, I am so ignorant that I do not know how in this country of yours men ask women to marry them! Will you tell me how, señorita?"

"It is not very difficult," said Alicia. "You go to the girl and say: 'I love you; be my wife.' And then if she says 'yes,' you go to her parents or guardians."

"And if she refuses?"

"I don't think we need go into that," said Alicia.

.

There are some arts in which foreigners certainly outdo us, and the art of putting a lady in her carriage is one of them.

So Alicia thought as about four o'clock in the morning Calderon shut the door of Mrs. Brooks's coupé upon the two ladies. Alicia leaned forward, and their eyes met again. She was to see him

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at twelve o'clock the next day at Mrs. Brooks's house.

The girl had almost forgotten this lady's presence, when, as the carriage plunged away from the door, her hands were seized and Lily exclaimed:

"Oh, what do you think! Such an excitement! He's going to be married. Mr. Calderon, I mean. Did you meet him? Oh, yes, I remember, I saw you dancing with him. He told me the whole thing, except the lady's name; asked me if I would pave the way for him with the parents, as if it would need any paving. What a man it is! It seems he has done this whole thing—yachts, horses, everything—in order to have some friends and acquaintances to refer to in this country. He was in love with the girl when he came. But he says we are all so vague about Central America that if he had not had a position among our own country people to offer, we would have set him down as an 'obscure dago.' Could anything be more delicious, or more flattering to a woman than such behavior! Won't Jane be angry! He evidently has not told her a single word. He must have been terribly sly, for I myself not

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only do not know who she is, but I could not even make a guess. I hope it is not the Morris girl. Alicia, are you not at all interested?"

"Oh, yes, I'm interested."

"Did not you like him?"

"Oh, yes, I liked him."

"Aren't you curious?"

"No. You see I know who she is."

"You know! Alicia, who is it?"

"It's me," said Alicia, in a meek little voice, and fortunately the ungrammatical syllable was somewhat muffled in the folds of Mrs. Brooks's ample *sortie du bal*.



CYRIL VANE'S WIFE



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CHAPTER I

AS the train drew out of the tunnel, most of the occupants of the Pullman car stirred and rustled with relief, and opened their books or newspapers, looking about them. But the lady and gentleman in the last two seats neither spoke nor moved. She, her chin in her palm, stared out, as if unconscious of the change from darkness to light. He sat with his head back, his arms folded, his eyes closed.

Already their entrance had centred attention, for the lady was a beauty ; on that there could not be two opinions. Her bearing, even before one saw the lovely oval of her face, left no one in doubt. Ugly women can rarely forget the bitter fact. Merely pretty ones betray by self-consciousness their knowledge that

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their shaft is uncertain of its effect; but real beauty is calmly, sweetly sure, and, like a true aristocrat, can afford to forget itself. So this lady, with her pretty, fresh clothes and simple, effective movements, drew everybody's eyes, and was quite calm under the ordeal. She could not have been more conspicuous in the glare of foot-lights than she was in the commonplace of every-day life. The gentleman, too, slim and distinguished, was not unremarkable. He appeared to minister to the needs of beauty ably, yet without emotion.

They began to talk. Some of their neighbors would have been glad to hear the interchange, but their tones were carefully pitched.

As a matter of fact, their conversation was more interesting than its manner suggested.

She said, without special inflection: "Let us understand each other."

He replied, without opening his eyes: "If possible, let us."

The lady cast a cold glance over, rather than at, him.

"I wish," she said, "I had your power of being

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non-committally exasperating whenever an important issue is at stake."

"It is a power," he murmured, "which you have no occasion to envy."

She, as if accepting the ambiguity of this reply, said: "Shall we say, then, your power of evading the question?"

"What is it a question of?"

"Our whole relation."

"What, again?" His eyelids had not once lifted.

"Oh, heavens!" cried the lady, "to think that I am married to a man who would sacrifice the last remnant of my affection for the sake of being merely smart!"

"My last remark," said the gentleman, sitting forward and observing the scenery, "did not present itself to me in that light, but your compliment is none the less appreciated."

To this she replied with a look that said as plainly as spoken words, "Because I do not sink to your level by answering you, do not suppose your insolence is not understood and despised."

"If, however," he continued, with deliberation,

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"you find my bearing offensive, attribute it to the tempered justice of your own manner, which, as you know, has always had a peculiarly maddening effect upon me."

"Nor," said she, with emotion, "is your own manner more fortunate with me."

"It is a pity, is it not," said the gentleman, as, with a gesture so gentle as to be almost tender, he handed two tickets to the conductor, "that we are both so influenced by the non-essential?"

"Oh," said the lady, "I have known you to be irritating, bad-tempered, and impossible before, but never in the whole course of our acquaintance have I known you as you are to-day."

"I think," said he, "that you see me angry for the first time, which, as you say, is a good record for a bad-tempered man."

With something, which in more retired surroundings would have degenerated into a flounce, she turned on him.

"Angry!" she said, and she was disgusted to find that her voice shook on the strong rising inflection. "By what perversion of facts are you able to be

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angry at me? I, who have borne with your moods, and your vagaries, and tried to pretend I liked it, and have studied to please you—studied, heaven knows, as I should have supposed only ugly women had to study—and have concealed my growing repugnance for you, until your own indifference——”

“Be accurate,” said he; “I have, we know, a number of faults—more, even, than you have had time to enumerate; but inconstancy is not among them. I love you as devotedly as when we first met.”

The lady opened her mouth, not to speak, but to gasp, with that wonder which would like to cry “liar” if it dared. Instead, she said:

“*Cyril*, where are we? What do you mean? Was it not last evening that you broke out with the truth about this ‘fetter matrimony’—your own words—‘this noose against which every man sooner or later rebels’? Did you not say——”

“All, and felt even more; yet, nevertheless, I love you, love you even passionately.”

The lady who had expanded a little at the apparent prospect of a flat denial, again withdrew into herself, with a chill shrug of her shoulders. “I see,”

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she said, "that it is quite impossible to discuss the matter with you at present."

"In that case," returned he, rising, "I will go and smoke a cigar."

Mr. and Mrs. Cyril Vane were on their way to spend Sunday with Mrs. Vane's mother. Their marriage, which had taken place some two years before, had been so unfortunate as to meet with the disapprobation of all their friends and well-wishers. Hers had naturally expected for so much beauty a more striking position than a novelist of more note than popularity could give her. Few of them knew him, and most of them distrusted his rather remarkable literary achievements. As for his partisans, they openly lamented that if Cyril must be at last inveigled into matrimony it should needs be with a professional beauty. The two assumptions that lay behind these different points of view were neither of them wholly just, namely, that because he was clever and migratory he was incapable of making a woman happy, and that because she was a professional beauty, she must be devoid of brains. Mrs. Vane was indeed, in her own way, an unusually intelligent

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woman, little as her splendid blank exterior might suggest it. Her restful appearance was, perhaps, but an intelligent economy of her powers, for why exert one's mind when one's looks are perfectly able to attain any desideratum?

Not until the train reached their station did Mr. Vane return, and then he entered talking to a man he had met in the smoking-car. They were discussing yachts. For some reason, this simple fact irritated her intensely. She stepped into the victoria that was awaiting them in magnificent, isolated silence. Not so her husband.

“Is it not strange,” he said. “How do you do, Timmons? The shorter way home, please. Is it not strange how differently different women become different equipages. Now you”—he glanced at her critically—“were evidently intended by Nature for a victoria. What a pity that I have never been able to give you one!”

Mrs. Vane turned away her head, raised her parasol and her eyebrows, and remarked that the country seemed in need of rain.

With a readiness that seemed to defy any topic

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to find him unprepared, Mr. Vane replied: "It is an interesting and remarkable fact that while, as you suggest, so dry an April has never been known in this part of the world, in the West floods are occurring daily. But, you will say, since one is no more destructive to crops than the other— What, you are not interested in crops?"

"I am interested in nothing," cried Mrs. Vane, with passion, "except that the man I love has made me despise him."

"And in God's name," returned he, with a change of manner, "why do you despise me?"

"Because you have deceived me, because you're dishonorable," she answered, with the fluency of one who has often secretly rehearsed her case. "You persuaded me that your love was to be something different from other men's, that our life would— But, of course, you will only point out how great a fool I was to believe you—and now that I have given you everything, now that you have taken all you wanted, now that I am completely in your power— Oh, I never imagined how wholly a high-minded woman is in the power of her husband!"

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What fools women are, ever to grow dependent on men! Even now if I did not, heaven be praised, hate you, I would go all lengths to make you care. I suppose I ought to be glad that I can be free mentally and practically. Thank God, I have no child to bind me! I need never see you again when I have once left you."

"I must have been dull," said Mr. Vane, quietly, "but I did not understand that you meant to leave me."

"Oh," cried she, wringing her hands at the impotence of language, and again, "oh! is my bondage so great or my spirit so small that I would stay with a man who tells me that for him marriage was 'a dangerous experiment,' who feels the 'noose,' who promises me, of his clemency, to be mine again at the end of a 'year of freedom, say in the South Pacific'? Merciful heaven! do you never think that *I* may feel it a noose? Do you forget that I am a beautiful woman, and that freedom spells something for me, too? That *I* may tire——"

"I had certainly assumed that you felt so until I saw how my own attitude surprised you."

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“Say, rather, that you have not thought of my feelings at all, but simply of your own”—the victoria stopped—“as on all other occasions. How are you, mamma? Here we are.”

A slim, middle-aged lady met them.

“Dear Rosanne, dear Cyril, how well you look! Doesn’t he look well, Rosanne? And you, too, dear.” So softly purring, Mrs. Lester drew them into the house.

She had been, as it were, the rock of defence of Cyril’s friends. They had felt that if by any impossibility he were able to be happy with his wife, he could never stand his mother-in-law. It was, therefore, extremely annoying to them to observe the close, if somewhat fantastic—fantastic as far as he was concerned, at least—alliance that existed between them. They held long, dull conversations on subjects that no one else had ever been able to make him recognize. Perhaps it was that he enjoyed being treated as a perfectly commonplace person; perhaps he was sufficiently intelligent to value the real kindness and good-breeding that underlay a tolerably foolish manner.

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Mrs. Lester was, indeed, a survival. She was a curiosity, like the first steam-engine. She was the first fine lady. At a time when such a thing was unknown she had achieved it. She had been taken abroad when not a girl of her acquaintance had gone; she had had all her dresses from Paris; she had been taken into the best societies of foreign cities; she spoke many languages with an ease conveniently limited by the range of her ideas. With very little intelligence, she had acquired a certain gentle elegance, and when, with her marriage, conditions had altered, her development had simply stopped. She was still the woman with whom a certain potentate had once danced, and she was nothing more, unless, of late, she had become, as well, the mother of Mrs. Cyril Vane.

She sat dispensing tea to her daughter and her son-in-law with little beringed hands, quite unconscious of any stir in the atmosphere. It never occurred to her they were on bad terms. She thought it not well-bred to be on bad terms with one's husband, and she was convinced that her daughter would never do anything ill-bred.

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“There’s your tea, Cyril dear, not too strong—it’s so bad for you strong. Are you tired, Rosanne? Not that you look so. I am always so done up after a journey, but not you. Isn’t it wonderful, Cyril?” She shook her head, looking contentedly from one to the other.

Rosanne made no effort to join conversation with her mother. She sat apart, keeping the elder lady engaged with smiles and recurring monosyllables, while her mind was busy with words, biting and exact, with which she labelled her husband; this embezzler of her youth, this breaker of promises more solemn than the demands of church or state. And then from this high arraignment she dropped to the more childish but eminently satisfactory consideration of the point of view of those other men, who had, and perhaps still, loved her. She herself could only accuse her husband of inconstancy, falseness, and such mere moral offences; but how would these others mock him for his folly, in that having had her love he had lost it; in that having the right to stay, he should of his own free will leave her!

With thoughts of this nature she beguiled an

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evening that otherwise she might have found dull. For Mrs. Lester had launched forth upon the delinquencies of her servants, and Cyril was alternately sympathizing and advancing extravagant and elaborate solutions of the servant problem, at which Mrs. Lester finally began to giggle, until she dropped her eye-glasses into the tangle of her embroidery silks, and Rosanne rose in fine solemnity and swept off to bed.

But, of course, she did not go to bed. She sat before her glass mournfully regarding herself in the light of a failure, stinging phrases rising to her lips.

After about an hour she heard a knock at her door, and her husband came in from his dressing-room. He had changed to his morning clothes, and through the open door she saw his portmanteau was strapped.

“Where are you going?” she said.

“That depends on what steamers are sailing for where, to-morrow morning.” He shut the door, and stood leaning his back against it, his hands in his pockets. “You have said a number of noteworthy

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things to me in the course of the last twenty-four hours," he began, at length, "of which the most important is that you no longer love me. That leaves, of course, no room for argument, so I am leaving you, although, I repeat, I do love you——"

"My dear Cyril, that assertion serves admirably to put you in the right, but——"

"I don't care sixpence about being in the right."

"—but is scarcely credible. But, to save discussion, let us say, then, that I do not value your form of affection."

"Exactly. You do not value it, although it has not changed an iota since the time when you did value it."

"There I differ with you."

"But the facts agree. Before marriage was decided on between us I took some pains to make my unfortunate characteristics plain to you, especially my attitude toward marriage itself, which I painted in terms infinitely more offensive than anything I said yesterday. At the time I thought you showed fine generosity in your reception of it. Now, I am inclined to believe you did not get beyond the flat-

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terry of my wanting, in view of such opinions, to marry you just the same. Whatever you thought, you said, I remember, that you supposed all men of spirit felt as I did—that I merely outdid them in being willing to acknowledge it. You said some excellent things about personal liberty, and outlined a scheme of mutual honesty to which I have been absolutely faithful. You have never been. You were not honest at the time. You have not been since. Not only have you failed, but you resent my success. In fact, the only charge you make against me is my absolute fidelity to the scheme of life you yourself outlined. You said you were a woman who could stand the truth, and when it was dealt out to you, you cried aloud that I was a brute. What you meant was that you could stand the truth as long as it was pleasant. I was a fool, undoubtedly, to think you wanted anything different from what other women want, but I had your own assurance. If I have been a fool, I have, at least, been an honorable one. You have not. This is my presentment of my case."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Vane, "I am so tired of these presentments of yours which always leave you so

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completely justified in doing whatever you want to do!"

"Justification be damned! I want you to see——"

"While I, who struggle and agonize and efface myself, am always, always in the wrong. But what is the use of talking of it all! You want to go; I want you to. Go, by all means."

"At present," said Cyril, slowly, "I don't think there is any use in talking of it." He moved his shoulders from the door, and put his hand on the knob. "I'm going. In a year we'll try again."

"No," said Mrs. Vane, with emphasis. "You have tried and wearied me beyond what even I can bear. Go, and for God's sake never come back!"

For perhaps a second something in his look, in the slight rigidity of the lines of his figure, met the requirements of the dramatic.

Then the door shut very gently behind him.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Mrs. Vane realized that her husband was really gone, her state of mind became one of excited triumph. The weapons by which he had so often worsted her in the past—his wit and plausibility, his very charm—had all been rendered entirely futile by the simple statement of her own indifference. The world, of course, might consider her a deserted wife, but what did that matter? Her husband would taste the consequences of his conduct. He had sighed for freedom. Well, now he was free. She did not have to look further for her revenge. Nor did she stop to consider the flattery to the culprit implied in the point of view which took account of no other spectator.

She and Cyril had known each other little more than a year when they were married. Their meeting had been in this manner: A friend of Rosanne's

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had asked her to luncheon to meet a celebrity of the hour. This invitation, though it necessitated coming in from Fallowfield, Rosanne was glad to accept, partly from affection for Mrs. Hale, her hostess, partly from curiosity to see the great man. But, like many charming and indulged people, Mrs. Hale was vague, and when she found that her lion could not come, the whole matter slipped from her memory. Later, she asked Vane, for whom at the time she was entertaining a slight tenderness, for the same meal, and at last ended by forgetting him too, and going out herself. So that when Rosanne entered the drawing-room on the appointed day she found no one but a gentleman of some thirty years, who was displaying a very elegant ankle as he sat in a deep chair reading a magazine.

He rose and helped her off with her furs, laying them aside with a touch neither over-appreciative nor yet obtuse.

“Mrs. Hale has not come down?” said she.

“She has not come *in*,” he returned, with the exasperation of the long-sufferer. “She asked me to luncheon at one.” The clock had struck two.

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“And I am punctual,” said Rosanne. “Do you suppose she has forgotten all about us?”

Vane felt like answering, “All about you, yes,” for he had been expressly invited to a *tête-à-tête* meal.

“Suppose we ring and ask,” said Rosanne. “Crincklebridge is a friend of mine.”

Crincklebridge, the butler, an elderly, precise person, who, for his sins, had taken service with Mrs. Hale, and for his attachment could not leave her, now appeared and confirmed their worst fears. Mrs. Hale had gone out to luncheon, but earlier, Crincklebridge fancied, she had told the cook that a gentleman was coming. To Miss Lester, Crincklebridge could hold out no hope. He said civilly that Mrs. Hale had omitted to mention that Miss Lester was expected, but this, of course, deceived no one. The truth was she wasn’t expected.

“I tell you what, Crincklebridge,” said Vane, “if luncheon is ordered for two, let’s have it;” and this, in spite of a few faint protests from Rosanne, they proceeded to do.

Never were two people better or more quickly

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pleased with each other. Never were these two people in particular more aptly, easily amusing. Never was a meal merrier.

From their first meeting their acquaintance became a love affair, a love affair, however, harassed by the most deadly of foes—those of its own household. The only obstacles in their path were of their own making. Vane had long determined against matrimony, recognizing wisely enough in himself a vein undomestic, almost uncivilized. Sometimes it led him to shun his fellow-beings, sometimes to seek them under new conditions; sometimes he merely disappeared, strange countries for to see. But in whatever form it showed itself, it was a streak which, as he had already had occasion to notice, was incompatible with the holy estate. And, quite logically, he believed that having encouraged it by indulgence, he had already chosen a bachelor's part.

On the other hand, marriage with such a person was not exactly the climax to which Rosanne had looked forward. Without being precisely mercenary, she was sufficiently ambitious, and with her con-

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spicuous beauty she had dreamed other dreams than love in a cottage.

It took just a year for them to cast out these theoretical devils, and at the end of this time they were married.

Statistics tell us that the majority of divorces occur during the first five years of marriage, a fact which no one will find very surprising. It is not easy for lovers to put up with being taken for granted, with being, as it were, a presupposition of every-day life. The crisis is not in their being less happy, but in their taking that happiness as a matter of course.

And being taken as a matter of course turned out to be a thing bitter to Rosanne's soul. Cyril, being a man, bore it better. That to be used to her was not to be tired of her was an idea she could not admit. When first she saw the demon of familiarity bearing down on her, she tried to hold him off by increasing and unusual efforts to appear each day more beautiful and charming in the eyes of her husband. But human capacity has its limits, and in spite of these well-directed attempts, which were

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indeed received by Cyril in the most flattering spirit, the fact remained patent that they were not lovers in adversity, but husband and wife, who might be tolerably sure of a good deal of each other's society.

It was in this adjustment to the commonplace that they had both so signally failed; Cyril, positively, in not being able to adapt himself; Rosanne more plausibly in lacking tolerance for his failure. Indeed, she would not see in the final outburst that had led to their separation a failure—a weakness of his nature—but, rather, an insult to herself. As such, it called for revenge, and this, in spite of the incredulity she had expressed, she knew she had inflicted—inflicted with a certain poetic justice—in giving such complete liberty to one who asked only a little. But, she said to herself, what else could she do? If marriage as she conceived it was impossible between them, then they were better apart. Apart for all time, she murmured, and at once began imagining their meeting at some remote day, both changed—she, cold; he, wiser. Heaven knows from what heights of folly and wounded pride she was dashed

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by a paragraph which appeared in all the papers some ten days after Cyril's departure. Already a West Indian hurricane had been reported, and every boat that came in from those waters had fresh tales to tell of its violence. But now came anxiety for the boats that did not come in, and among those was the S. S. Alethea, bound for West Indian and Central American ports. Rosanne did not know until she read the enlightening paragraph that Mr. Cyril Vane, novelist, was among the passengers. A few days later, two of the unfortunate boat's crew were picked up in an open boat. They were the only survivors. The Alethea had foundered off the Central American coast, with all hands.

Rosanne met this bitterest of fates in silence; even if she had wished, there was no one to whom she could well have spoken. Her friends knew little of her husband, and his she had neglected to make her own. But, as a matter of fact, she probably felt little need of self-expression. She had the gift of absolute silence, often found in elementary natures. Superficially, she was sometimes fluent, but when she was nearly touched she could present a blank

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stillness that the dead themselves could not outdo.

Poor Mrs. Lester was frankly unhappy. She cried alone and in public, and only found comfort in telling of the virtues of her son-in-law—virtues which for the most part were not those prized or, indeed, discovered by his other friends. She did her best to make up for Rosanne's silence by expressing for her all the fitting sentiment of widows, but she found something crushing in the presence of a grief that had no manifestation except the red and hollow eyes with which her daughter stared at her across the breakfast-table.

It was assumed, as a matter of course, that Rosanne would take up her life with her mother—there seemed no other course for two lonely widows. And what should have been in any case a natural choice was, actually, a financial necessity, for Cyril, whose writing had brought him a moderate income, had left little property.

Before the plan was put into operation, however—indeed, as soon as her mourning was complete—Rosanne took her maid and disappeared

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from sight and access by her friends to some wooded cove on the Maine coast.

We hear a great deal of new souls looking out of old faces, and remain uncertain that the difference is not merely one of age or ill-health. Rosanne came back changed—aged. A stranger might have called her still dazzlingly young, but the first effulgence of youth was gone. Before, imagination was not able to project her into middle life; now, one observed with pleasure, she would still be a handsome woman at forty.

The life she returned to with her mother was not one to drown sorrow. There was nothing to interfere with the eternal grind of her own thoughts. The two ladies breakfasted together at nine, after which it was Mrs. Lester's habit to make a tour of her domain. On this she believed the whole domestic machinery pivoted, though the inspection was not of a very searching nature. In the kitchen it was: "Good-morning, Eliza. How nice your kitchen always looks! You've sent the orders for the day? Ah, well I'm sure you will have something nice for us." And very much the same at the stable. "Good-

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morning, Timmons. You've sent the horses to be shod? They need it, do they? Well, that was right to send them."

This duty accomplished, it was their custom to sit together sewing, an occupation of which, by some strange chance, they were both inordinately fond. Here Mrs. Lester's conversation was of an endlessly interrogatory form:

"Dear, dear, Rosanne! If this is right in this one it can't have been in the other." Such cryptic utterances always meant that Rosanne must detach her eyes from her own work, and her mind from sad recollection, in order to discover just what corner of her embroidery her mother was discussing. Then luncheon followed, and the afternoon brought a slow drive through familiar country—at least, on days when Timmons would allow the horses to go out.

Rosanne had a cousin, Edward Lester by name, who had loved her so long, so deeply, and so hopelessly, that his position had grown to have all the disadvantages of a husband's without any of its compensations. She took his devotion for granted,

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and he took anything he could get, and was thankful. Yet he had, without knowing it, a useful place in her mental establishment, for she was either so indifferent to, or so sure of, his opinion, that it never occurred to her to be anything but absolutely frank with him.

He was surprised when, one morning in October, the pillar of crape which presented itself in his office turned out to be his cousin. She threw back her veil, and the whole office force, from the boy at the door to the middle-aged stenographer, stopped work, until Lester led her away to his private office, whereat pens once more began to scratch and typewriters to click.

Rosanne flung herself into the chair before his desk. She at least shared with him a total disregard of the value of his time, where her interests were concerned.

“Something must be done for me, Ned,” she said.
“Two months more and I shall be jibbering.”

Lester would never have attained his well-merited success at the bar if his mind had been less thorough, and so thorough a mind could scarcely be expected

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to be quick. Now he said, after some balanced thought:

“I understood you were spending the winter with your mother at Fallowfield.”

“That’s it. Just she and I. Oh, Ned, these October days! These cold, early evenings—the smell of burning brush——”

“I should not think,” he said, “that you would wish for a different life at present.”

“Shouldn’t you?” returned his guest, rather rudely, as she arose and began to walk up and down the room. **“Well, I do. Just as different as possible. If I were extremely happy—if I had some absorbing inner life, I might manage to exist doing nothing all day long, but as it is, oh, heaven!”**

“I may be old-fashioned—” began Lester, pompously.

“I shouldn’t think there could be two opinions about that,” returned Rosanne, yawning.

“—but I cannot see what else you want.”

“I want excitement.”

“In other words, you want to forget.”

Rosanne laughed. **“There isn’t much chance of a**

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woman's forgetting who has spent two years of her life with Cyril Vane. No, I want not to want to cut my throat. If I've got to live, I want something to live for. Good heavens, Ned, I'm young and strong! If I were a man, there would be things left for me to do. I want to do something entirely different. I wish I had talent, but I haven't."

"Will you marry me?" said Lester.

"For *excitement*," returned his cousin, and then feeling she had gone too far, she hastened to add: "No, dear Ned, I would not let you do anything so depressing. You would not want to marry me if I were in love with another man—at least, you oughtn't to want to—and I assure you it's a great deal more dangerous when the other man is dead. You would not like to think that every time you came into the room I was wishing you could change places with him."

Ned threw down the ruler he had been balancing on his forefinger. "It seems confusing," he said, bitterly, "that one minute you tell me the merest respect to your husband's memory is irksome to you, and the next that you are still so much in love with

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him that a second marriage is impossible. I must say I do not understand you."

"Well, we'll pass on to something simpler," said Mrs. Vane, crossly. "What I want is money. That's easy to understand. Preferably, lots of it, but at least enough to be independent—to be able to go away somewhere. There's only one possibility, and that is the gold mine in Central America, over which old Mr. Vane ruined himself. You know Cyril was on his way to San Miguel. He always half thought there was something in it. Now tell me how I can find out all about it, with the least trouble and the greatest haste."

Lester felt it his duty to point out to his cousin that there was no speculation so little likely to make the fortune of the poor as mines, especially gold mines; and he backed his opinion with several examples, including her late father-in-law. Rosanne paid little attention to him until his vague murmurs that Gray Henderson would know, if anyone did, impaled her attention. Gray Henderson's was a name to conjure with. Rosanne had a general impression that he had inherited half the mines in

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the United States and bought the other half. She said, with a gasp, that she feared Mr. Henderson's opinion would be rather hard to come by, but Lester assured her to the contrary. The great man was, it seemed, his client, and he offered to take her to the office at once.

Gray Henderson, or, as he was more familiarly known to the business world, Gray T. Henderson, was, as Mrs. Vane was presently astonished to see, a good-looking, gray-headed man, graced by the most perfect manner that it is possible to present. She had been prepared to find him unpolished, or, at least, over-polite; but such low-voiced calm took her by surprise. The truth was that never having heard of him socially, never having met him in the drawing-rooms she frequented, she had jumped to the conclusion that he would not be fitted for them. She was too inexperienced to know that so huge a financial success as Henderson's makes necessarily of an American a man of the world. It was not that he had no social position in his own city, but that this was swallowed up by his business importance on two continents. It was not that their paths might

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not naturally have crossed, but, rather, that Henderson, when he wanted relaxation, preferred to take it in more concentrated doses than she and her peers usually afforded. His yacht and racing-stable occupied most of his time outside his office, and what was left he did not spend in Society as she understood the word; for him, this was too easy for a game and too mild for an amusement.

His social presence was certainly excellent, particularly with women. He made no pretence now that his time was not of value, and contented himself by saying simply, when Lester apologized for the interruption, that it was a pleasure to him to be of use to his friends. Yet, in some way, a few minutes later, when his secretary came in to say that a very great man wanted to see him as soon as he was disengaged, Henderson's leisureliness conveyed to Rosanne the assurance that friendship for Lester was no longer the only cause of his polite attention.

Ned was very much at his ease, and opened the conversation by remarking that his cousin, Mrs. Vane, was in need of someone to tell her that an undeveloped gold mine in Central America was not

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a fortune-maker. Henderson smiled and observed that all mines had been undeveloped once upon a time.

Rosanne hastened to put before him all the information on the subject that she could remember. It was the sort of mine, she hazarded, persuasively, where you got the gold out without any trouble. Mr. Henderson remarked, gravely, that this was much the best kind to have. It was an old Spanish mine, a very celebrated one; she thought that there were records showing how valuable it was—at least, she thought it was actually proved to be the same as the old Dos Estrellos, a lost Spanish mine. Had Mr. Henderson happened to hear of it? Yes, Mr. Henderson had, indeed, but rather feared it was a myth. Of course, if this proved to be the same, why then—he paused—why, then, it might be worth while to send an expert down to look it over. If Mrs. Vane would let him have any documents she might possess on the subject—

He was not discouraging enough to please Lester, nor sufficiently hopeful to satisfy Rosanne. She went away with but two clear impressions, that he was

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the very kindest person in the world, and that it would be necessary to see him again at an early date, after he had looked over the papers.

He accompanied them to the elevator. The two men shook hands, with an irritating consciousness in the minds of both that each thought himself master of the situation. In the meantime the real master of the situation remarked pleasantly as she set foot on the pavements again:

“Really, Ned, I have seldom met a more agreeable and conversable person.”

“He is considered dangerous to your sex,” said Ned.

Rosanne roused her memory unsuccessfully. “I have not heard of his conquests,” she said.

“Very likely not,” replied Lester, ambiguously.

In his office the great man had touched a bell and summoned his private secretary.

“Gates,” he said, as a dapper little gentleman entered, “before Monday I should like to know something about Mrs. Vane.” (He referred to a card.) “Mrs. Cyril Vane—all you can find out. Tell Senator Purdy I’ll see him, and, Gates, don’t try to get

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anything from Lester. Try women. Your aunt might know."

And as he sat down at his desk, and the door closed behind the obedient Gates, he murmured: "It is a long time, it is a very long time since a woman has made me feel like that."

CHAPTER III

“OH, my dear Rosanne!” cried Mrs. Lester on the evening of the same day, as soon as they were alone after dinner. “What do you think has happened?” Her tone was serious enough for tragedy, but Rosanne was not alarmed, and the elder lady went on with well-bred plaintiveness: “As I passed the stable this morning, I saw Timmons chasing Eliza about the coach-house with a whip, and when I remonstrated, he said he had a perfect right, she was his wife. It seems they have been married for five years. Isn’t it dreadful?”

“Dreadful for Eliza,” said Rosanne. “Matrimony seems to be in the air. I had a proposal myself this morning.”

“My dear! From whom?”

“Not interesting, mamma. Only Ned.”

“Of course, you said——”

“‘No,’ of course.”

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There was a moment's silence, and then Mrs. Lester began gently: "And yet, my dear, I often think it would be much better for you to marry again. Not just yet, of course, but some day. Your life here is so limited, so sad, and if you don't marry, I don't see how——"

"Oh, mamma, don't!" Rosanne broke in. "I know it all. How can I help knowing that a second marriage is the only thing that could give me anything to make life pleasant? If I can't be happy, of course I should like to be rich, and prosperous, and excited. But I never shall be. I don't feel any less married to Cyril than when he was alive. There is a difference, but I can't make myself feel it."

Mrs. Lester looked both shocked and annoyed. "You talk, dear," she said, "as if the Church did not recognize second marriages. I hope you don't think you know better than the Church. There's nothing immoral in marrying again."

"There would be for me."

"The feeling will pass."

"Perhaps, if marrying was just keeping a man's house and spending his money. But, my dear

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mother, I have my ideals. I should wish to be something even to my second husband, and to be something one must be honest, and if I were ever even approximately honest, what would he find me? Cyril Vane's wife."

"You seem very extravagant to me, Rosanne," said Mrs. Lester. "Your affection for your first husband is very creditable, I know. But there is no reason why, even if your feelings for another man were not as——"

"Oh, I know. You are going on to say that if Cyril were in my place, all women would not on that account be non-existent to him—quite the reverse. Men can run a whole scale in their relations to women. Women can't—at least, I couldn't. Either you marry a man or you don't——"

Mrs. Lester looked at her, still puzzled, and went on:

"Not yet, dear, not yet; but in a few years it will all seem very different to you."

"It's quite true, mamma. I shall not always be as unhappy as I am now. But what won't change is that I am an entirely different sort of person for

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having been Cyril's wife. He is responsible for a great deal of the sort of person I am. That is fixed."

It is to be observed that Rosanne did not mention to her mother that she had hopes that riches might come to her aside from the distasteful question of marriage. She probably would not have allowed the idea of the mine to linger in her mind if she had had anything else to occupy it. As it was, she saw visions and dreamed dreams of success.

A week later she received a note from Mr. Henderson, dated from his office, saying that he now had a few reports from mines in the neighborhood of her own, and other data which she might be interested to see. If she were in the vicinity of his office in the course of the next few days, he would be glad to show them to her. Otherwise, he supposed they would reach her safely if sent to Mr. Lester.

Rosanne hesitated. She did not like the idea of hastening to town at his summons. She said to herself that she visited no man but her tailor and her dentist. Yet, on the other hand, she did not want Ned to know any more of her affairs than was necessary, and therefore in as few days as her sense of dignity

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permitted, she presented herself at Mr. Henderson's office.

She was annoyed, not to say highly incensed, to learn that Mr. Henderson was engaged and could see no one. She was about to go away, with a feeling, however unreasonable, of outraged womanhood, when the polite Gates sprang out of a noiseless door.

Would it be possible for Mrs. Vane to wait ten minutes? Mr. Henderson so much regretted—nothing but an appointment of the utmost importance with Mr.—, and he named a man for whom even a vain woman might forgive being put aside for ten minutes.

Gates showed her into a little room in a tower of the building, so small as to leave no room for more than a writing-table and a comfortable chair. Windows opened on three sides, and she looked out over the harbor, from the smoky Narrows to the steep New Jersey shore.

A moment after she was alone, the secretary returned, laid a sheaf of papers on the table, murmuring that Mr. Henderson thought she might care to look them over while waiting, and again withdrew.

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Rosanne took them up. They were the reports in question. She turned them over vaguely. "Report of QV. Mine," "Report of V. G. Wilson, Mining Expert to the S. C. I. Co.," "Report—" She wondered if it had not been a trouble quite out of proportion to the result to typewrite so many pages, and put in that neat little clip. Then her eye fell on the last sheet—it was not typewritten—it was an ordinary sheet of note-paper, stamped with the name of a good uptown club, and was marked in blue pencil: "Report on Mrs. C. V." It said:

"DEAR MR. HENDERSON: In regard to the information you desired, I would say that I have been able to obtain only the following: Mrs. Vane was a Miss Lester. In September, 1901, she married Cyril Vane, the novelist (author of 'The Young Man Afraid of Himself,' 'Temperature and Temperament,' etc.). During his lifetime she seems to have been the centre of a clever, literary circle, but whether from choice or necessity, cannot determine. Tastes would appear to be more conventional and social. Since Vane's death has lived with her mother at Fallowfield. Means, extremely limited."

This was signed with the name of the polite secretary. Across it, in a hand Rosanne recognized as

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Mr. Henderson's, was pencilled: "O. K. as far as it goes, but want more. How about occupations, friends, especially women? Characteristics? *Age?*?" The word *age* underlined.

Rosanne sprang to the table, where pen, paper, and ink were carefully ready, and at once began to write:

"Mrs. Vane is now in her twenty-eighth year, and possesses a collection of characteristics so conventional as to be scarcely worth enumerating were it not for her singular power of *bearing resentment*. Her female friends, of whom she is so fortunate as to possess a number, are not in the habit of furnishing public reports upon her. Although without special abilities, she is something of a judge of character, and is not, in her estimates of chance acquaintances, obliged to depend entirely on outside information. Her means, though small, are not so inconsiderable as to induce her to submit to impoliteness in the process of increasing them."

This accomplished, she snatched up her muff and shook the dust of the office from her feet.

A few minutes later Mr. Henderson and his secretary entered the little room simultaneously.

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“Mrs. Vane gone?” said the former, cheerfully.

But the secretary was surprised. He said he had left her looking over the papers only an instant before. Then his eye fell on the papers. He saw that the clip had been removed, and a new sheet inserted. This he lifted, and, to his horror, saw his own note beneath.

“I give you my word, sir, I took that out,” he gasped. He knew that explanation in the face of disaster only irritated his chief, yet his clear conscience had to speak.

“Very likely you did, Gates,” returned Mr. Henderson, and, looking up, the secretary observed an agreeable twinkle in the great man’s eye. He gasped.

“How did it get back, then?”

“I put it back,” said Henderson, picking up the papers, and smiling gently as his eyes ran over Rosanne’s lines. “There, there, don’t distress yourself. We must not let our guests be bored. Now find out when the trains go to this place—Fallowfield—call a cab in time for me to catch the first one, and in the meantime send up one of the stenographers.”

At half past three he was stepping into the cab

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that was to take him to the station. He had great faith in the principle that the only essential with women was to excite their attention—the method was immaterial. Nevertheless, his present method appealed to him particularly. It was striking, it was personal, and if it made her angry, why, so much the better. Women were so approachable when angry.

Of course, in the past week he had not depended entirely on Gates for information concerning Rosanne. He had prosecuted some inquiries on his own account. He was especially curious as to Vane himself, and his relations to his wife. Reports were so conflicting on these two points that a certain mystery surrounded them. Men whose opinions Henderson respected spoke warmly of Vane, of his brilliance, his wit, the fine temper of his mind. One of them, an artist of acknowledged genius, who had made a bitter trip through the Northwest in Vane's company, spoke with emotion of his courage, his unbreakable power of endurance. The details were such that Henderson, a brave man himself, could not but thrill at them. Yet he listened with a certain dis-

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pleased surprise. Were such men as Vane, who wrote novels more praised than read, who quibbled over words and had theories about the drama, were they to excel their fellows in physical bravery and outdoor prowess? He failed to combine the two impressions into a vivid idea of the man. Nor was he much helped by younger men, who called Vane difficult, morose, hardly a man's man, who expressed surprise at the painter's story, and confessed to knowing him little, and to having never read his books. Everyone agreed that he and his wife had been in love with each other at the time of their marriage. The chasm between that event and his death, no one could bridge for him.

So, naturally enough, he bridged it in the light of his past experience, which told him that pretty women seldom loved their husbands, and that a good deal of affection might easily be swamped in the delights of young widowhood. His opinion of the sex was poor in the extreme; either because luck had been against him, or, as is more probable, because his taste had led him among the least trustworthy.

He was not mistaken in thinking he should find

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her at the four o'clock train. He entered one door of the station as she the other. He presented himself without greeting.

“A very lamentable incident,” he said.

Now Rosanne had been amusing herself throughout the day with mental pictures of the consternation that must be reigning in the office on the discovery of their error. She fancied they would take it seriously—it amused her to think how seriously—and this idea was confirmed when she saw Henderson, so evidently bent on apology. Strangely enough, however, at his light reference to the occurrence she found herself suddenly regarding it more hostilely.

“Frankly, Mr. Henderson,” she said, with Olympian calm, “it was not the way I expected to be treated.”

“Now, my dear lady,” said the great man, and it was observable that as the attacking party he seemed more at home, “I treated you exactly as I should have treated a man who wished to enter into business relations with me. You came to me as a mine-owner, not as a woman.”

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Of course it is irritating to be told that you have allowed yourself to be angered by the inevitable, but Rosanne had not argued with Cyril without learning something, and now answered with spirit:

“I don’t see that it matters in what capacity I came; I can’t alter the fact that I am a woman—even a lady.”

“To those who are so fortunate as to be your friends. Believe me, I shall be proud if you will allow me so to think of you. I feared I was nothing but a man of business and must behave myself as such.”

“I don’t think your point a good one. I am both a mine-owner and a lady. It doesn’t seem to me that it requires so very fine a perception to distinguish between the two and yet hold them both in mind, but I would not for the world overtax anyone. Good-afternoon. I’m afraid it is time for my train.”

“Your train does not go for six minutes,” he said, raising his eyes to the clock behind her, and she did not turn to verify his statement. “In the mean-

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time," he went on, "I should like to make you see that the report you object to was the best possible proof of my wish to serve you. If I had not meant to go into the matter, I should not have troubled myself."

"It was Mr. Gates who took the trouble—trouble which I might have saved him if I had understood that it was necessary to bring references like a house-maid."

"Ah, well, I can see you don't know much about business," said Henderson, tolerantly. "I would be willing to wager, for instance, that you were angry with me for letting you wait. A lady perhaps should not be kept waiting. Yet if I had not kept you, a great railroad would probably have gone into the hands of a receiver, and I should have let that happen only for the sake of a woman I was in love with, and that you will admit would have been a greater liberty still."

"Upon my word, Mr. Henderson——"

"Remember, my dear lady, I kept you waiting, how long it might have been you will never know. 'Ah, I'm afraid that was your train.'"

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"Oh," said Mrs. Vane, in dismay; and added, "You said I had six minutes."

"I have never received a more charming compliment."

"You mistake me. It was your accuracy, not your powers of conversation, that I was blaming." She was not a little put out. "There is no other train until eight."

It is a great general who can change his plans. Perhaps Henderson had hoped to fill in those four intervening hours, but he saw in an instant how little likely she was to consider any such idea, and he instantly struck another, and equally effective, blow in his campaign.

"Surely the five o'clock flyer goes through Fallowfield?"

"Exactly. Goes through without stopping."

"It will stop this evening. You will be at home as soon as if you had caught your own train. Excuse me a moment." He disappeared in the direction of the offices.

And surely enough, the five o'clock express, the company's pride, did stop at Fallowfield in order

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to allow a solitary female passenger to alight, amid solicitous porters and conductors.

And to tell the truth, the lone passenger was not a little impressed. Time-tables were to her as inevitable as the laws of nature—to meddle with them seemed almost sacrilege. So when she saw the obsequiousness with which the meddler was greeted she could not but weakly admire. Power is a dazzling thing.

She had left him with cold gratitude. Nevertheless, he might on the whole congratulate himself on a good day's work.

CHAPTER IV

THE main source of Henderson's success in life lay in the consistency with which he acted on his own opinions. An extraordinary number of people in the world are wise enough to foresee, and too little self-confident to take advantage of their foresight; and many a true prophet lets the catastrophe find him unprepared. It was not so with Henderson. Having once made up his mind—a slow process—he abided by his decision. He did not lose heart when others disagreed, nor did he spend his force arguing the same question twice.

Such a method he applied to his relation with Mrs. Vane. The idea of asking her to marry him did not at first occur to him, but he would have been glad to occupy her attention to the exclusion of other men. He would have liked to flatter, to interest, to entertain her, to give her everything she ever wanted, to be important to her, until finally it would

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so happen that she would be more anxious to please than he. This was what he was accustomed to expect from the gentler sex.

Such a state of things being impossible in the present instance to attain directly, he began to consider the best indirect means at his disposal. And when he had decided on these he never wavered.

He recognized that her interest in him was vague, or at least impersonal. To make love to her he knew would be a mistake—a circumstance he was as easily able to attribute to distaste to matrimony as to regard for her former husband's memory. The fact was that the problem of interesting her without daring to have recourse to love-making took hold of him.

He was fortunate in having already impressed her with his place in the world ; it was one that could scarcely fail to impress anyone, but he had contrived to fire her imagination with the dramatic aspect of commercial success. She was prepared to be honored by his friendship, if it were offered to her.

And exactly this was offered to her—simple, un-

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threatening friendship. He talked to her, or seemed to, of his successes and his failures, his weaknesses and his strength, of his schemes, of men and affairs, giving her the feeling that she was very near the centre of great happenings. His talk was good and was, besides, of stirring things. It became in fact the only excitement in her life, and she valued it accordingly.

And all the time through their intercourse ran a reassuring undercurrent. His manner at times was almost paternal, though the word does scant justice to his temperate kindness. He never tried to ignore the difference in their years. Rather it seemed so obvious to him that he rarely mentioned it, except in such phrases as "A clever young man, your own contemporary." As their friendship progressed he even spoke to her on the subject of a second marriage. He spoke of her ability, her scope, of the narrowness of her present life. He explained the assistance she could give a young man. "A woman like yourself," he would say, "could make anything she liked of a man. Take, for instance, a young fellow like your cousin—oh, well, I'm not blind!"

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With your imagination and humor tempering his thoroughness, you could put him where you wished."

"I shall never marry again," said Rosanne, decidedly.

"I'm sorry to hear you say so," said Henderson. "You know your own business best, but I should like to see you married. All the happiest people I know are married."

"Yet not you yourself."

"I, oh, no! My life is divided between business and amusing myself. My house is merely a place in which to rest and recuperate. I should never pay your sex the poor compliment of regarding it as soothing. And in any case, rest and recuperation are not the things I should most desire from my wife."

"I wonder what you would require of her?"

He smiled. "Really nothing, I think. I am afraid she would find no special sphere of activity. I find my life as it is astoundingly satisfactory, especially since you have done me the honor of letting me come and talk to you now and then."

He was in the habit of dwelling thus on how much

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their intercourse meant to him. He described at some length the effect she had on him, a sort of combination of narcotic and stimulant, like the very best liquor. His mind, he said, never worked as well, he never saw as clearly, as after he had been with her. She was not gullible, but she believed him. What other object did he have in seeking her company?

She found nothing suspicious in the fact that in their various and intimate conversations Cyril's name had never been mentioned. She attributed the omission to her own natural reserve. She did not confess, she did not probably understand, that it was another feeling, a sense of incongruity, that kept her from talking of her husband to a man who, though not a lover, was taking up more than a lover's space on her mental horizon.

Their confidence in each other and perfect understanding soon went so far that at some mere word, some glance of comprehension, they were able to smile at Mrs. Lester's obvious misunderstanding of the situation—the poor, wise lady, who thought that men sought women for but one reason, and women encouraged them with but one intention.

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"She is perfectly right, you know," said Henderson, magnanimously, "right about nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand. It is only the exceptional woman who stirs men to other emotions than love."

Lester, ignorant of Henderson's charitable advocacy of his cause, disapproved of the new order of things. He disapproved because he was jealous, but he did not give this reason even to himself.

He told Rosanne plainly that Henderson's reputation was such that no decent woman should allow him to be attentive to her, and made so many dark hints about the great man's past that Rosanne at length told him it was impossible for her to believe that in this age of the world so complete a Lothario could exist.

This was when they were alone. Before Mrs. Lester, Ned did not dare be quite so outspoken. But he would stand on the hearth-rug at Fallowfield and sow the seeds of wisdom, as becomes a man in the presence of his female relations.

"The only trouble with Henderson," he would say, "besides, of course, not having been born a

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gentleman, is that he is selfish and determined.”
Here he directed a warning glance at Rosanne.

“Dear me, Ned,” said Mrs. Lester, rather flurried, in view of her expectations, “I hope you are not expressing your opinion that one should not have him at the house?”

“Ned,” said Rosanne, without raising her eyes from her embroidery, “is expressing nothing but a man’s natural disgust at finding his friends better liked than he expected.”

“Rosanne may be as disagreeable as she pleases,” returned Ned, “but I don’t want her to suppose that she is a free agent. If Henderson wanted to marry her to-morrow, he would. For all I know, perhaps he does. She does not honor me with her confidence.”

“Indeed he does not,” said his cousin, crossly. “He could never be so delightful a companion if he wanted to marry me.”

Ned colored and remarked in a low growl of displeasure that he hoped Henderson might never have anything worse to reproach himself with than the wish to marry a virtuous woman.

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“Goodness, Ned, what words! Virtuous woman! It is so eighteenth century as to be scarcely proper.”

Yet, for all she was so flippant, the conversation marked an era. From this day on it occurred to her to notice, not with surprise, but with a strange mingling of pain and satisfaction, that she was changed, that in former times a man could not have liked her as much as Henderson did, and have stopped short of love. From this day, whenever he was with her, she kept observing how plainly he was not in love with her, and remembering that under other circumstances the omission would have annoyed her. She spent not a little time in imagining the great man under the stress of passion, envied perhaps the woman who could excite it, and even sighed that for herself such diversions were over.

What explanation can be offered, however, of the fact that a month later she told her mother of her engagement to Henderson? After all her protestations, had she simply married the first man who asked her? In truth she was surprised to find the difference his merely asking her had made. The fact that he loved her had surprised, flattered, and, to

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be honest, delighted her. Clever and practised as he was, his own overmastering emotion at the crisis had aroused in her something which, as far as it went, was sincere, too. Not for an instant did she fancy herself in love with him, but her friendship suddenly became idealized, or, to be accurate, emotionalized. It was lifted out of the cool atmosphere of mental congeniality and plunged into another, hot with emotion. Her feeling for him, standing this high temperature unhurt—nay, all the better for it—assumed a new value in her eyes. There was the point. Its value was so great that she could not let it go. In an instant she saw clearly that to be loved, to be needed by someone, and that someone a person of importance in the world, was her only chance of making anything at all of the life that was left to her.

This, and the assured cunning of the man, who was wise as a serpent and far from harmless as a dove, are the only facts that can be brought to elucidate the conduct of a woman still broken-hearted at the loss of her lover.

CHAPTER V

THE announcement of Rosanne's second marriage was met by none of the disapproval that had greeted her first. A few people smiled at the proverbial ease with which widows console themselves. A few more regretted that decent women could always be found to ally themselves with such men as Henderson. However, for the most part the world felt that a beautiful woman was about to fulfil her manifest destiny in accepting such a position as Henderson could offer his wife.

To say Rosanne accepted this position, but mildly expresses her conduct. She appeared to yield herself without reserve to the intoxication of being fabulously rich. Henderson, in love and lavish, met with no repulses. She never suggested that jewels were too large, or furs too magnificent. She took whatever he gave, and encouraged him with her appre-

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ciation. This was no surprise to Henderson. He expected women to be greedy and frivolous. These were the qualities that made it so delightful to give to them.

Certainly he did not interpret her attitude as being a determined effort to make the best of a bad bargain, though it seemed patent enough to her. She did not content herself with the more material of his benefits alone. She insisted on meeting the great men with whom he was associated, until her house began to have an importance beyond what is usually given to social prominence.

Through the winter people envied or admired, as was their habit of mind, and asked each other if they remembered her when she was Rosanne Vane. Some were so disagreeable as to suggest that it was just as well Cyril had died before this streak came out in her.

In the summer the Hendersons went abroad in their yacht, and there great personages were very civil indeed, and at Cowes a crowned head deigned to come on board for dinner, and admired the boat and the dinner and Rosanne's pearls, and finally

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Rosanne herself so openly that the next day Henderson firmly and tactfully set sail for the coast of Norway.

Rosanne smiled when he announced this decision. It was not astonishing to her. Since their marriage she had found him uniformly suspicious. Jealous she could not call him; he seemed too confident that her interest lay in pleasing him. It was not therefore that he distrusted her deliberate intention, but rather the folly, love of intrigue, and general levity which made up to him the main attraction of her sex. Having played a part before marriage, it was inevitable that he should appear a different person to her afterward, but she was naturally surprised at the change. Things were not at all as she had been led to expect. He loved her passionately, but now in his own way, not in hers. She was very much loved, but she had somehow ceased to be interesting. As a study he had completely given her up. The hunter who domesticates his prey may be kind, but can scarcely be expected to devote the same attention to it as when he was tracking it through the brush.

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He was a great deal with her. Was it to give pleasure to her or to himself, or merely to keep an eye on her? He never now talked of his plans. She learned them from the daily papers. Their intercourse had entirely lost the intellectual fervor she had so much valued. She still had great power over him, but it was not power of the mind. She often wondered why he had preferred her to other women, and whether her indifference had been her charm. He seemed blind to any quality or characteristic in her, as if all women were of the same mould, this one having the distinction at the minute of being his own. This attitude she felt so clearly that she speculated how long it would be before another was preferred to her.

As for her own feelings in the matter, she was, of course, wretched. She was still at the altar when she knew she would have given all things for freedom. The holy estate of matrimony, far from helping her to forget, only recalled more poignantly her life with the man she had loved. Cyril's personality was always with her. She in very fact was leading a double life. To make matters worse, she had but to

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fall asleep to dream of him. This had been an anguish spared her heretofore.

Nevertheless she bore herself well. She was a woman of spirit and conscience, and having brought the situation on herself she dealt with it fairly. She made Henderson a good wife. She even tried to understand his point of view, and dissuade him from it; tried to point out that she did not wish every man to make love to her, or believe outwitting her husband to be a woman's legitimate pastime.

She bore in mind that he was twenty years her senior.

One morning, as he was going out, he handed her a crumpled letter without envelope.

“Tell the gentleman,” he said, pleasantly, “that he writes an excellent love-letter, but it won’t do. I am not complaisant, nor your maid trustworthy.”

Rosanne, opening the latter, found it was an old one of Cyril’s, though there was neither date nor signature to betray the fact. Only the other day while re-reading it, she had slipped it among her handkerchiefs, on the sudden entrance of her maid. She wondered now which one had discovered it. For

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a moment she was silent, her sense of what was due to Henderson struggling with her repugnance to speaking. At last she said, with evident effort:

“This man will not write to me again. He is——”

“I think I can guess who,” replied Henderson, though she did not know who was in his mind. “No, do not let him write again. You have,” he smiled, “too much to lose.”

The subject was never again mentioned between them.

During the third year of their marriage Henderson's attention was again called to her mine by letters from a former employee of his who had settled in San Miguel. This man Saunders wrote that the mines of the country were doing surprisingly well, and urged Henderson to come down and look into his own claim. Henderson would perhaps not have considered it, if Rosanne had not violently seconded the plan.

“My absence is precious?” he suggested.

“On the contrary, I should go with you, if you will let me.”

She longed more earnestly than ever for an in-

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come absolutely her own, for independence, and that this should come from Cyril's property made it the more desirable.

In January, with great effort and heavy breaking of business bonds, Henderson managed to get away, and he and his wife set sail for the little republic of San Miguel.

CHAPTER VI

AT this time San Miguel was a dangerous place for capitalists. The minerals were so plentiful, the soil so productive, the towns so unimproved—so many excellent schemes, in short, went begging for lack of a little ready money to develop them—that capital was the legitimate mark of one out of every five of the inhabitants.

Henderson had some knowledge of these circumstances, and took care, therefore, that his coming should be unheralded. He wrote to Saunders, asking him to meet them at the port, and to make arrangements that from there they should go straight to the neighborhood of Rosanne's mine.

So, when at dawn, the little fruit-steamer rolled into the harbor, the obliging Saunders was sitting on the dock, amid the *débris* of bananas, the confusion of loading, and the sing-song voices of the

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Jamaican laborers. A sheet of tropical rain obscured the row of palms along the shore and the little white town, and completely hid the mountains of the interior, but could not wholly hide how verdantly on all sides the little country sloped down to meet the sea.

About seven o'clock a large English engine, attached to three empty freight-cars and a caboose, gave a short whistle and—for no discernible reason, except that the engineer had now finished his coffee—forthwith began its slow ascent to the capital.

At first their way lay through a forest of palms, past occasional huts built up on poles above the marsh, thatched and poor, but usually decorated by a couple of hibiscus bushes on each side of the door. It was damp and stiflingly hot. Then they came to higher land—banana farms and primeval forests of the gigantic trees of the tropics. Later still the engine struck the heart-breaking grade that lay before it for the rest of the day, and now on each side of them were rows of dark-green coffee-trees. The rain ceased, and the air grew fresh, almost cool.

Henderson and Saunders were talking mines to

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gether, and Rosanne was content to be left alone to enjoy her surroundings, the country, and her fellow-passengers. She heard three languages in the course of as many minutes—English, German, and Spanish. The engineer seemed to be a Welshman, the fireman a Jamaican, while the conductor was a native. They seemed all possessed by a common indifference to the printed hopes of the time-table. A pleasant informality attended them. At one station an important-looking man in a pith helmet called out, just as they had begun to move, asking if they would stop at Don somebody's house, or if he had better walk. The engineer and the conductor, after a brief conversation, carried on from opposite ends of the train, came to the conclusion that they would stop, and so backed up again to the station for the gentleman, who, a hundred yards farther on, alighted, with expressions of gratitude, at his destination.

Rosanne found herself the object of a good deal of frank curiosity, more especially her English habit, for she had been warned that the last part of the journey must be made on horseback.

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About three in the afternoon they left the train at a little station which bore the imposing name of San Innocente del Sur, although the town consisted of a white plaster church and a few one-storied pink adobe houses. Here they took horses, small, ill-nourished, but strong, sure-footed beasts, and plunged upward into the heart of the mountains.

Rosanne never forgot that ride. The air was cold, and a wind like the winds of northern autumn was blowing in a clear sky. It had been raining steadily during the previous week, and the road at the edges covered the horses' knees with mud. In the middle it was frankly a bog.

Straight uphill they went, the little horses' feet slipping and sliding, while the mud oozed and sucked under their hoofs. Beside the road a narrow river, full and turbid, came down from the mountains in a long series of rapids and falls. Then they left it, turning more sharply upward, until they came out on the very summit of the ridge, and saw the valley below them. All around it stood masses of mountains, distorted as if only yesterday some hideous convulsion had thrown them up, here

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bare and sandy, there covered with tropical verdure. So silent and wild, it seemed to Rosanne that she could have fancied herself the first white explorer, until high up on the opposite range Saunders pointed out their destination.

This was a long, low house, white, with the inevitable red-tiled roof. It was set in a garden which at that distance showed nothing but pink and white patches, that later revealed themselves as gardenias, roses, and jasmine growing almost wild.

“This,” Henderson explained to his wife, “is where we are to stay. It belongs to a Mr. West, a mine-owner.”

“Very kind of Mr. West, upon my word,” said Rosanne, who was bringing her social conventions into rather unfriendly soil.

“Oh,” said Saunders, “he does the same by me when he comes down my way. His is the only *hacienda* within fifteen miles.”

“He expects us to-day?” said Rosanne, politely. Saunders laughed. “He doesn’t expect you at all, Mrs. Henderson. We aren’t so formal in this country. Couldn’t be if we wanted to, with the roads in this state. But it will be all right. He may likely

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enough be away, but his man will be there, and make us comfortable. It is a nice house to take a lady to; not like some. He lives well, West does."

Rosanne remarked that it seemed rather a casual way to treat a stranger in a strange country, but observing that it was evidently a matter of course, she turned to her husband and asked how near they were to her mine. At this a slight cloud appeared upon Henderson's brow, and he answered in a lowered voice:

"Why, Saunders does not seem ever to have heard of your mine, and I can't help suspecting that this fellow West is working uncomfortably near it, if not actually on the property itself. Confound these governments and their grants! He's making a damned good thing of it, too, Saunders tells me."

"Good heavens," said Rosanne, "if we are going to have to fight the man, don't let us begin by accepting his hospitality!"

Henderson looked at her as if she were somewhat slow-minded. Then he said: "I shall have the whole truth out of him in twenty-four hours."

They were received cordially by West's man, a

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light-colored Jamaican negro, his natural sociability tempered by training, and his liquid speech modified by a cockney inflection.

"How are you, Montagu?" said Saunders. "Is Mr. West home?"

"Mr. West just ride down to Santa 'Hanna, sir. Back directly. He will be glad to see you, gentlemen, and you, too, mistress. Step inside." He gave some fluent orders in Spanish to a native boy who appeared for the horse, and then hurried about preparing the rooms, arranging shower-baths, bearing kettles of hot water, and at last having established them all on the veranda in long chairs, disappeared, only to return again with whiskey and soda for the men and what he called a *narangada* for Rosanne. A moment more and cigarettes and cigars presented themselves. Both whiskey and tobacco were good. Saunders was right. The owner of the house knew how to make himself comfortable.

Rosanne sat on the veranda watching the sunset in the valley, listening to the talk of the two men, and recalling the impressions of the day. Then the desire to impart these rose in her, and she got

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up and wandered into the house with the idea of writing to her mother.

The first room she went into was evidently a sort of office. Maps and drawings hung on the walls; a photograph, too, of Madison Square in winter, that had a strange, mythical look in its present surroundings. Near the window stood a large desk of native cedar, highly polished. Its pens and paper were well cared for. Its blotting-paper looked worthy of confidence. Its piles of docketed papers spoke of an ordered disorder. Here she sat down and began to write:

“**MY DEAREST MOTHER:** You have never imagined anything as tropical as the tropics. Except that it is actually chilly, and I have seen no snakes hanging from branches, the geographies give one a perfect picture. From where I sit I can see two palms, and just think, dear mamma, a bread-fruit tree! Isn’t that Swiss-Family-Robinson-ish? This house—the Hacienda Los Dos Estrellos—is just as it should be. It is set in the loveliest of gardens, and there is another inside. There is, I assure you, a flowering inner court—a *patio*, they call it—and a white cement fountain in the middle. Our host, an American by the name of West, is not

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here. During his absence we have entered in and taken possession. This appears to be the custom of the country. He has ridden into one of the neighboring towns—fifteen miles away—and does not know of our arrival, nor indeed of our existence. He is, we are sure, a man of taste. Gray judges by his whiskey and I by his books. 'As You Like It' was lying in the hammock. And at this moment I perceive a horseman in the valley, who must be the poor, unsuspecting man himself, and, wonderful to relate, he is whistling Schubert. The air is absolutely calm and still, and I can hear every note. It is getting dark—it gets dark with the most astounding rapidity—but I think I detect rather good-looking breeches and leggings; if so, it is in striking contrast to Gray, whose sense of tropical fitness has decked him out in the oldest and dreadfulest of flannel shirts——”

The letter never got any further, for at this point Rosanne looked out again. The horseman had now kicked his feet out of the stirrups, had pushed his hat back, and was feeling in his hip pocket, presumably for his cigar-case. Certainly it was growing dark, but in the bend of shoulders and head over the lighted match, Rosanne saw plainly enough a startling likeness. A passing glance some-

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times plays odd tricks, but sane eyes, even at dusk, should not too long continue an illusion. The man came on slowly, and as he drew nearer Rosanne sat with her hands holding the arms of the chair, and stared through the twilight, waiting, second by second, for the vision to vanish, and truth to assert itself, for the figure to lose its familiarity and become credible.

Yet this did not happen—not even when the rider urged his horse to a gallop, and approached rapidly. Rosanne gave a low, exasperated groan, as of one on whom a cruel joke is being perpetrated. Just before it reached the house, the road was hidden from her view. It was in this moment, perhaps, that she knew the truth, for when he reappeared she was on her feet, her knees shaking.

She heard a well-known voice call "Montagu." She heard the negro explaining how Mr. Saunders had ridden in, with a gentleman from the States and his lady. She heard his step in the house. The next instant he entered the room, and she and Cyril Vane met again.

They neither spoke nor moved.

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Then Saunders and Henderson came in to greet their host.

“How do you do, West! This is Mr. Henderson—Mr. Gray T. Henderson, of New York.”

“My wife, Mr. West,” Henderson put in, punctiliously. West bowed.

“Well,” continued Saunders, “I rather think you must have heard of Mr. Henderson”—West acknowledged the justice of the supposition—“and know that wherever he is, look out for mines. I tell you what it is, West, you have had a touch of fever. You look bad.”

“Well, it isn’t a health resort, you know,” returned West, pouring out some whiskey.

“Now there you surprise me.” Henderson was deplorably suave. “At this elevation, in this climate, I cannot imagine a healthier spot, certainly not a more beautiful one.”

“Indeed,” said West. “You must be hungry. Montagu, dinner in fifteen minutes.”

It was not a gay meal to which they presently sat down. The dining-room was so enormous that the swinging electric light over the table—the

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house was lit throughout by the dynamos at the mine—illuminated a very small part. Montagu, in a white jacket like a yacht's steward, insisted that the lady should sit opposite her host. This gentleman seemed to have somewhat recovered himself.

Henderson leaned across the table and said:

“You have not given me time, Mr. West, to thank you for your kindness in taking us in like this. My wife was just saying—Rosanne, my dear——”

Mrs. Henderson's lips moved, she looked vaguely about her, and continued silent as if unconscious of her social obligations, so that her husband perforce went on: “My wife was saying that it seemed rather casual, rather an imposition on a stranger——”

“I should be sorry, Mr. Henderson, if you felt under the slightest obligation in the matter.” He turned to Saunders. “Any news down in your part of the world?”

Saunders looked about him as if some items were scarcely for a lady's ears, and then recollected the fact that the overseer at the next plantation had

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turned out to be the chap who robbed the Wisconsin bank.

“The devil he was!” said West. “Nice fellow, too. Spent ten days with me here when he first struck the country, and cleaned me out at piquet. Wouldn’t ever look at a Northern paper; said they could not tell him anything he wanted to know.

“Well, that was better than that English chap, who saw in the morning paper that he had landed in the country and promptly ate up all the fatal food Don Gaspar had imported for the cockroaches. You meet queer people in this country, Mrs. Henderson.”

“I think you do,” said Rosanne.

“An interesting life, a very interesting life,” said Henderson, and Rosanne recognized instantly that diplomacy had entered in, that he was speaking with an object. “You have been long in this country, Mr. West?”

“No, a few years.”

“Ah, well, that is a good deal to some men, to a man like yourself. I have no doubt that you know it thoroughly. Saunders tells me that I could net

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apply to a better person for information concerning a mine I have come down here to look over."

West turned. "You are interested in a mine?"

"Why, yes," Henderson said, and added, as if he were in two minds about mentioning so trifling a circumstance: "In fact, I own it—at least my wife's first husband did."

"Practically the same thing, I suppose," said West.

"Really, Gray," Rosanne interposed, "don't you think we might put off business until after dinner?"

Henderson did not notice the interruption. "Yes, practically the same," he said, "except that if it had been mine from the start I should have— Well, it would have been managed differently in many particulars; but then everyone is not a business man, you know, and the consequence is that I have been forced to depend on the rather insufficient data which my wife has been able to put at my disposal."

"It is a pity you could not have the full facts."

"It is indeed, especially as I have not had much experience in dealing with these governments. I

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have no idea how much difficulty is involved in establishing a title. There is a point you could help me on, if you will." He looked piercingly at his host as he put the question. "Did you find any obstacle in taking possession of your claim?"

"Not the slightest," returned West. It might have been mere emphasis, but Henderson found the answer suggestive of courtesy. This made him the more suspicious. Evidently the man wished to end the discussion. He continued at once, in much the same manner:

"Then, if you do not mind my asking, it will be of real service to me to have the advantage of your experience—how did you come by your mine?"

"In the only way in which I should ever have become a mine-owner—I inherited it from my father."

This, if true, was baffling; but Henderson, undaunted, said, still regarding the other attentively: "Indeed! Your father must have been an unusually progressive man to have dabbled in Central American mines in his generation."

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“Rather too progressive, we all thought at the time.”

“Ah, well, ah, well, there is always a time when we think that of all advance. All successes have periods of looking like failures. If I do as well with my mine as you have with yours, I shall be perfectly satisfied.”

“The main thing is, of course,” said West, suggestively, “to first catch your mine.”

At this unfortunate speech Henderson’s suspicions took more definite form, and with a certain severity he said :

“There, again, you probably know more than I do. I feel tolerably well convinced that the mine lies in this identical valley.”

West for an appreciable time returned the look before he answered very distinctly: “Why, in that case, Mr. Henderson, I should not spend any more time or money over the matter, for there is no mine but this within twenty miles, and no gold mine within forty.”

Henderson laughed rather disagreeably. “Why, why, Mr. West,” he said, “isn’t that rather a sum-

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mary way of dismissing the question? I think I could show you some documents that would make you change your mind. I undoubtedly have a claim in this vicinity, and if there is, as you say, only one—" He stopped, but the inference was, and was meant to be, sufficiently obvious. He added, as if relenting: "The mine, however, might have escaped attention, as it has never developed since the Spaniards first worked it."

And now West's manner too changed, as if a new idea had taken hold of him. "Why, my dear sir," he said, amiably, pushing the claret across the table, "I shall be delighted to go over your documents, and give you any assistance in my power, but I am sorry to say I cannot encourage you. You have no idea how much of this sort of thing is seen by a man who puts in any time in these countries—men who discover coal, men who tin turtles, men who find opals, men who want to use volcanic dust as fertilizer—they all come——"

By this time Henderson's irritation, which had so far kept him drumming on the table, forced him to interrupt.

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"This, let me say, Mr. West, is somewhat different."

"Yes, yes, indeed, West," put in Saunders; "you don't seem to appreciate at all the sort of man Mr. Henderson is."

"I have," Henderson went on, "if you will pardon the conceit, at least as much business experience as you. I am not in the habit of going into anything in ignorance, and when I say I own a mine in this valley——"

"You believe it, I'm sure," West conceded, civilly.

"It is a fact."

The other meditated an instant. "I tell you," he said, "there is an old worked-out silver mine on the other side of the mountain——"

Henderson was getting livid.

"I think I said," he answered, "that the mine I have reference to is gold."

"You will find no gold mine but this one."

Henderson glared. In the silence that followed, the sound of the salad fork in Rosanne's shaking fingers, playing a tattoo against the china bowl,

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was painfully audible. Three pairs of eyes turned quickly on her, and at this, as if it were the last straw, she incontinently burst into tears and rose from the table. Henderson turned to her solicitously. West rose, too, but his eyes were fixed on Henderson alone, as he said :

“If Mrs. Henderson would like to go to her room, let me show her where the lights are.”

The three crossed the hall, West snapping the electric switches. He also opened her door for her. Henderson would have followed her, but she stopped him. “Please, Gray, go back to your dinner. I would rather be alone. I am tired, I’m——”

West shut the door behind her, and the two men’s eyes again met. For the first time Henderson recognized that there was not only something incontestably hostile in his host’s bearing, but that it was intended to be apparent.

They returned to the dining-room.

“Saunders,” said West, “see that Mr. Henderson has everything he wants. I find one of the electricians is waiting to see me. I will be with you directly.”

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He saw them seated at table, then he went out, turned the corner of the house and tapped on a window.

An instant later, across the sill, he was holding a sobbing woman in his arms.

CHAPTER VII

THE moon was not yet above the mountains, but her light had spread over the clear, faint blue sky of the Southern night.

“Oh, Cyril! Oh, my love, my husband!” Rosanne sobbed.

He held her in silence. At length she began:

“You knew I was—you knew I had—” A gesture indicated the absent Henderson.

He bowed his head. “Would I have let you think me dead otherwise?”

“Oh, that you are not! Why did you ever leave me?”

“I shall never leave you again, Rosanne.”

“Leave me!”

Another pause, then she said:

“Cyril, I did not love him; I did not fancy it for an instant, but he seemed to need me, to offer me—”

His hand on her mouth stopped her.

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“Not yet,” he said; “I can’t bear the explanation yet. Let me think I understand.”

Their talk, considering the shortness of their time, was hardly connected. At length she asked:

“Why did you not come back? Where have you been all this time that I have been so wretched?”

He pulled himself up to the sill, and slid noiselessly into the room. He locked the door—a precaution that she had neglected, and then in the large bare room, sitting by her side on the hard little bed, he told her everything in a whisper.

He told her of a little island in the Caribbean, green and uninhabited, within sight of which many ships pass, and none touch. This had been rented from the government to which it belonged by an American named Cornby, and there he lived alone. Cornby, it appeared, was an old friend of the captain of the *Alethea*, the ill-fated boat on which Cyril had embarked at New York. Not many days out the captain had confided to Vane that without the knowledge of the company he was going to stop at Cornby’s Island, which was well in his course, to leave a boat-load of supplies. Later, as they be-

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came more intimate, the captain told Cyril many anecdotes of Cornby, of his eccentricity, and his adventures. He had been a blockade-runner in the Civil War ; a soldier in the Chinese army during the war with Japan ; he had been into Africa, and knew something of the highest Andes. As Cyril listened, his curiosity or his sense of kinship was aroused, and he half formed the intention of going ashore himself with the supplies, and having a look at the man, trusting to luck that some ship would touch before long.

He half formed the intention, but when, one evening, just after sunset, he saw the little green spot, circled by white beach, lying solitary in the opal sea, the temptation became too strong for him, and he went.

He told Rosanne much of Cornby, his combination of sophistication and simplicity, of lack of education and wisdom, his directness and his reserve.

“Some day,” he said, “I’ll take you to Cornby’s Island, and you will like him and be very happy.”

He told her that he had left a letter for her on

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the Alethea, to be posted as soon as she reached port, and how he never knew for more than a year that it was lying at the bottom of the Caribbean, for newspapers did not penetrate to the island.

Once or twice a year a sailing vessel touched and brought mail and supplies. Some six weeks after Cyril's arrival this occurred. Mail came, but included no answer to his letter. At this he decided to remain. He and Cornby were happy. Different as day and night, they understood each other perfectly. They fished and shot and sailed together, often in silence, often attacking each other's philosophy and scheme of life.

Soon Cornby's character and the strange story of his life so worked on Cyril's imagination that he began his great play. After this months went by quickly.

But as the year drew to a close, the year he had stipulated, he made ready to depart, and now no vessel came. The year was more than over before he succeeded in attracting the attention of a passing brig, and she, it appeared, was bound for Rio.

In this loveliest of harbors he once again touched

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civilization. Again he saw newspapers, Northern and local, and among the cables published by the latter—for, strange, indeed, are the items of news selected for the delectation of Spanish America—he read the announcement of the marriage of the great financial magnate to the widow of Mr. Cyril Vane. Under another name he cabled one of the New York dailies and received all the information he could require.

“Oh,” cried Rosanne, “why didn’t you come back, come back then? You knew I was desperate, you knew I loved you.” He half smiled at her in the dim light, and she answered his look:

“Yes, I had told you I didn’t, and I had gone to another man, but you knew, you knew I loved you.”

“I thought of what my return would mean. You give up everything to stay with me now.”

“Ah, if you knew what I had been through!”

“Rosanne,” said Henderson’s voice at the door, “shall I send you in something to eat?”

Her look grew wild and startled. Cyril’s hardly perceptibly changed. It was as if he had been wait-

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ing for this, while she, for the moment, had forgotten the presence in the flesh of the other man, or remembered him only as a theoretical obstacle between her and the man she loved. Now, at the sound of his voice, all the obligations of the past years reasserted themselves. She wished to save the situation, to explain, and to explain at her own chosen time. When she saw Cyril move quickly toward the locked door she sprang up and caught his arm, while she managed to gasp out to the man outside:

“No, thank you, Gray, nothing,” hanging breathless until his footsteps turned away.

When they had ceased, Cyril took her hands gently from his arm.

“Cyril, where are you going?”

“To tell him.”

“No, no, not you. That is my part, my punishment.”

He laughed. “Punishment! By God, it won’t be so to me!”

“Cyril, be just. It is not his fault. If you want to be brutal to anyone, be brutal to me.”

He laughed again. As he did so a faint sound

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without again arrested their attention, and Henderson's voice, as close as ever, said:

“Rosanne, who are you talking to?”

She clasped her hands with a quick repressed gesture. This time she did not try to hinder Vane. Perhaps she knew it would be useless, perhaps she would not add another struggle to the sufficiently sordid elements before them, perhaps she realized, as women rarely do, that the situation, though of her making, had passed out of her hands, and must be settled by the two men concerned in it. In any case she stood quite still, and Cyril stepped forward and opened the door.

The light from the hall shone into the room.

“Thank God,” said Henderson, “I never trusted any woman!”

Something calm, almost compassionate in the way they looked at him, suddenly struck him.

“Who is this man?” he asked, quickly.

“My husband,” said Rosanne.

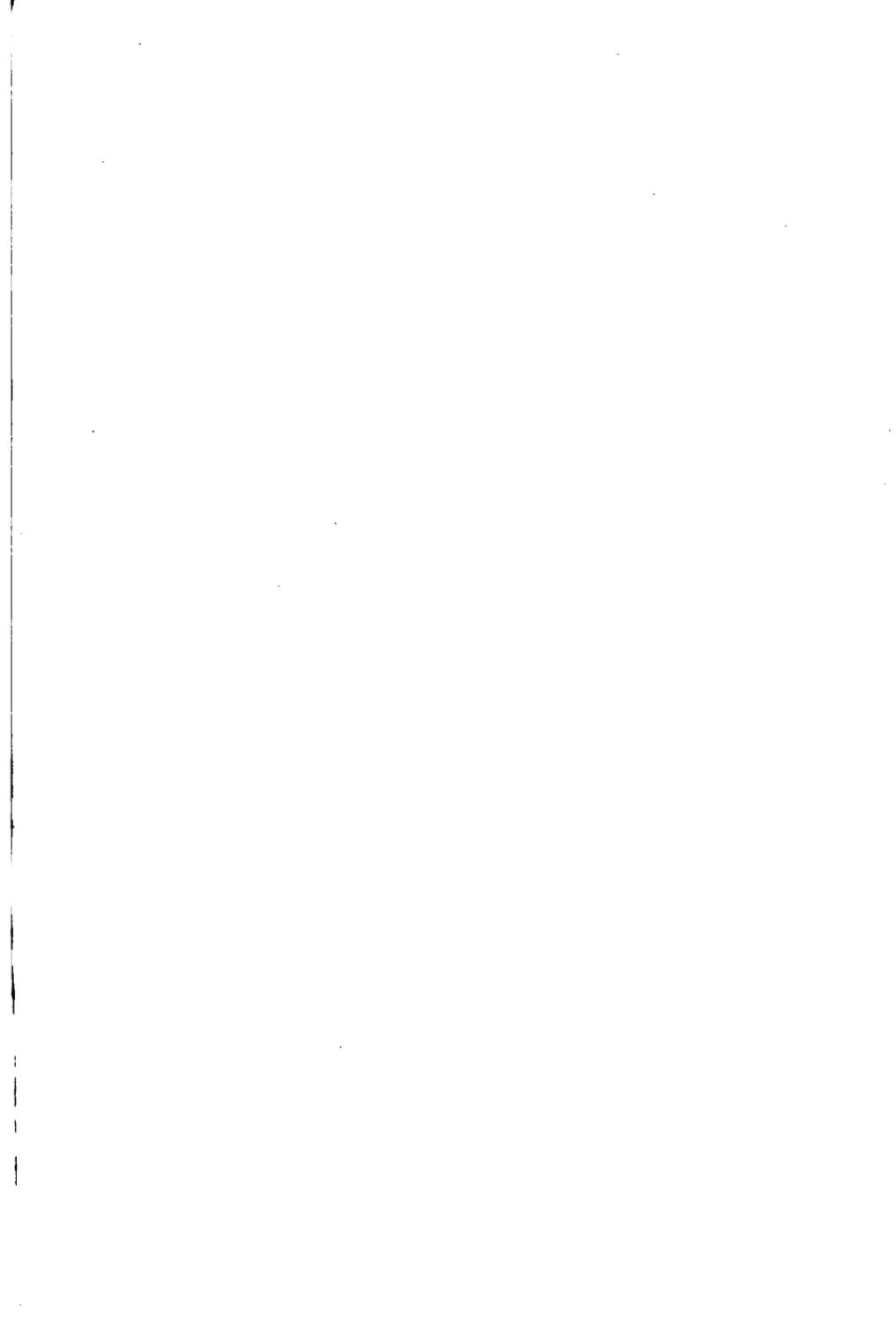
And still the traveller to San Miguel is told the strange story of how the wife of the great finan-

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cier—a lady of beauty and refinement—came to stop a single day at the Hacienda Los Dos Estrellos, and in that time fell victim to so sudden and violent a passion for the proprietor that she would never leave him again, so that the broken-hearted man of millions returned home alone.

As for West and the woman, cut off by their conduct from their own world, clever and prosperous, but necessarily isolated, they might be seen any day in guilty solitude riding about the mountains of San Miguel.

THE END









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